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New York

President:	Mrs. Ogwu/Mr. Sarki	(Nigeria)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Barros
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Jordan	Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein
	Lithuania	Mrs. Kazragienė
	Luxembourg	Mr. Maes
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Oh Joon
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Rwanda	Mr. Gasana
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Power

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Sexual violence in conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Women and peace and security

Sexual violence in conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2014/181)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Ecuador, Estonia, Germany, Guatemala, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay and Viet Nam to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Rhoda Misaka of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2014/181, which contains the report of the Secretary General on conflict-related sexual violence.

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon. I now give him the floor.

The Secretary-General: I thank Nigeria for convening this important debate.

Conflict-related sexual violence is an issue of pressing importance. This grave human rights abuse is as destructive as any bomb or bullet. It inflicts unimaginable suffering on women and men, girls and boys. It destroys families and communities and tears the social fabric of nations. By targeting society's most vulnerable members, it contributes to enduring poverty and insecurity. It impedes reconciliation, peace and reconstruction.

That is why the Council has clearly and consistently stated that conflict-related sexual violence is a matter of international peace and security. Successive resolutions have created a strong global framework for prevention. Grievous violations still occur too often, but we are beginning to make tangible progress, as the report before the Council (S/2014/181) shows.

My Special Representative has examined the progress made by several countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia. Just a few years ago, rape in these conflicts seemed intractable and inevitable. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia are now demonstrating that progress is possible. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is developing new legal structures to end impunity for perpetrators. Somalia has shown commitment at the highest level to ending sexual violence, including by signing a joint communiqué with the United Nations. Efforts are now under way to develop an action plan.

The United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict is working with Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Somalia and South Sudan to strengthen their justice systems. Every day, more countries are building the technical capacity to prevent and redress sexual violence. The multidisciplinary and multisectoral approach of the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict is driving this progress. The Special Representative engages in high-level advocacy to generate national ownership, leadership and responsibility.

Once political commitment has been secured, the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual

Violence in Conflict works with countries to build their capacity to fight impunity for crimes of sexual violence. The Team is drawn from the United Nations Development Programme, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and led by the Office of my Special Representative. It helps Governments to address reforms to the military and criminal justice systems and other crucial areas. With sound legislation, comprehensive prevention and response mechanisms, and enhanced capacity, military and civilian justice systems will be better able to address conflict-related sexual violence promptly and effectively.

Another key element in political and peacekeeping missions has been the deployment of women protection advisers. Their expertise on human rights, gender analysis and peace and security is helping to mainstream the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence into peacekeeping and special political missions. In line with the principle of "Delivering as one", United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict is an inter-agency network of 13 United Nations entities, chaired by my Special Representative. This coordination mechanism ensures that our response avoids duplication, leading to a measured, sustainable and coherent strategy that makes the best use of limited resources and the strengths of each agency. The goal is to provide services and support for victims and ensure that human rights are at the forefront of all interventions.

This coordinated response, under the leadership of my Special Representative, embodies the spirit of the "Rights up front" initiative. It affirms my vision of a United Nations that works as one to prevent grave human rights violations. It is imperative that United Nations actors and political leaders work together to stop rights abuses before they happen. The renewed commitment of the United Nations to better meeting the human rights responsibilities set by Member States through the "Rights up front" initiative is central in this regard. My latest report illustrates what we can achieve through greater cooperation. Prevention is our collective responsibility. Only through coordination and partnership can we succeed in protecting the most vulnerable. I count on the Council's continued leadership and support as we work together to eliminate sexual violence in conflict.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to Ms. Bangura.

Ms. Bangura: I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his presence here today and for his personal and steadfast commitment to this issue. I wish to thank the Government of Nigeria for hosting this open debate, which comes at a crucial moment of consolidation of this agenda, as well as the Council for the concerted focus and priority it has given to this issue for several years. I am also grateful that Ambassador Téte António of the African Union (AU) and Ms. Rhoda Misaka, representing civil society, are able to join us to offer their valuable perspectives.

It has been almost two years since I took responsibility for this mandate. I could not have imagined how difficult and heartbreaking it would be. The horrors suffered by the women, children and men that I have met re-affirm my conviction that sexual violence in conflict represents a great moral issue of our time.This crime, in its utter destruction of the individual and the pervasive way in which it undermines the prospects for peace and development, casts a long shadow over our collective humanity. That is why it deserves and requires the singular attention afforded by the Council.

It was a year ago that I visited Bosnia and witnessed first-hand the long-term implications of war-time sexual violence left unaddressed. An estimated 50,000 women were targeted with sexual violence during four years of conflict, but 20 years after the peace was made impunity for these crimes still reigns. The truth, most likely, is that most of the survivors will see no justice because the evidence is long lost and the perpetrators have long since fled the immediate scene of the crime. Yet, the irony is that those same perpetrators are not so far gone in reality. They still walk among the women and their families, occupying positions of authority and power that shield them from justice. For the victims, those perpetrators are a daily reminder of their broken lives. But the impunity that the perpetrators continue to enjoy is also a reminder to all of us — a reminder of our commitment to justice and accountability.

One of the questions raised by the Secretary-General in this year's report (S/2014/181) is: "What about the children born of rape?" In Bosnia, these children — possibly hundreds or even thousands — are now teenagers. How have they fared? Are they also pursued by stigma and shame? What are their health and psychological needs? What are their prospects for

education and employment? For me, the survivors of sexual violence in Bosnia are not only the courageous women that I met; their children and families are also survivors. Therefore, today I once again make an appeal on their behalf. Even if justice in the courts of law has so far been denied, the survivors must have reparations, including livelihood support, education for their children, and the medical and psychosocial services that they deserve and require.

The Secretary-General's report also raises a number of other themes, such as the acute vulnerability of refugee and internally displaced persons' communities, the lack of services for survivors, men and boys as victims, and the concerted focus now required on prevention, among other things. The report covers 21 conflict and post-conflict countries. It lists 34 State and non-State parties credibly suspected to be perpetrators of sexual violence. It paints a grim picture of a problem the full scale, scope and character of which we do not yet fully comprehend. However, today we do understand more about this phenomenon than we did earlier, and that knowledge is a source of hope that we can come to grips with conflict-related sexual violence.

While the road ahead remains long and hard, there is some light on the horizon. Never before in history have we seen such a level of political will and momentum. A historic declaration by the Group of Eight, and commitment by 144 members of the General Assembly last year, extend and reinforce the consensus that already exists in the Security Council.

Today the circle of stakeholders on this issue is dramatically expanded. This may once have been the concern of the lone gender adviser, but that is no longer the case. Now it also engages political leaders at the highest level, uniformed peacekeepers, mediators, ceasefire monitors, war crimes prosecutors and the full range of civilian protection, justice and security sector actors.

Resolution 2106 (2013) reinforces the infrastructure and the elements of accountability and compliance established by resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010) — an accountability regime based on reliable and timely information and analysis and the political- and operational-level actions that must be taken on the basis of such information. In its scope, operational detail and clarity, resolution 2106 (2013) encompasses the evolution of our understanding of conflict-related sexual violence and what it takes to prevent it. It outlines, for the first time, a framework to curb and prevent this crime.

Therefore, in terms of international legal norms and instruments, we now have the tools required to turn the tide. Our critical challenge now is to convert political will into practical action, to transform the resolutions into solutions and to drive real change on the ground.

That progress is crucial, and indicates that addressing conflict-related sexual violence is not a mission impossible. I believe that the progress vindicates the investment and focus of the Security Council, and is an encouragement to the Council to stay the course and reinforce its efforts.

Over the past few years, we have also gained greater clarity on the role that military and other security personnel can play in protection and prevention, and an important investment has been made in training to enhance operational readiness of our peacekeepers.

As we continue to drive this agenda on the ground, we will need to consider how to deepen the role of the defence and security sector, peacekeepers as well as national military and police personnel. To better focus our collective action, I believe it will be important to agree and clearly articulate the key priorities for intervention by defence and security sector actors in areas such as military justice; monitoring, information and early-warning; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes; ceasefire monitoring; and in the context of security sector reform. Those priorities are consistent with the elements of prevention under resolution 2106 (2013). Therefore, transforming military cultures to enhance protection and prevention is one of our essential priorities moving forward.

Coming into this role, my priority has been to deepen national ownership, leadership and responsibility. There have been some modest but meaningful gains in that regard. Last year, as the Council heard from the Secretary-General, the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia signed joint communiqués with the United Nations outlining priority areas of intervention to address sexual violence. Those commitments were undertaken at the highest levels of Government and are the basis for implementation plans that are now being developed by the national authorities in concert with the United Nations and other partners.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there were 187 convictions of soldiers and commanders

between July 2011 and December 2013, and 39 prosecutions related to the Minova incidents. In Guinea, there have also been high-level indictments related to sexual violence that occurred in 2009 in the wake of the contested elections. The United Nations Team of Experts has also been supporting national authorities in Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire and South Sudan. And in Central African Republic, the Team is supporting the establishment of a specialized rapid response unit of the gendarmerie to deal with sexual violence crimes.

At the regional level, we have signed a framework of cooperation between the United Nations and African Union that outlines key areas in which we intend to strengthen our cooperation, including more operationally oriented training for AU and United Nations peacekeeping personnel.

Unfortunately, the unacceptable reality is that today it is still largely cost-free to rape a woman, child or man in conflict. Sexual violence has been used through the age precisely because it is such a cheap and devastating weapon. That is why the international community has placed such great emphasis on combating impunity. By focusing on impunity, we direct for the first time a more determined spotlight on the perpetrators, and by so doing we begin to re-direct the stigma and the consequences of sexual violence from the survivors to the perpetrators.

Therefore, I would like to conclude my remarks with a message to the perpetrators: the spotlight is now turned on you, and we are coming after you with all the ways and means at our disposal. There is no hiding place. If you commit, or command, or condone such crimes against humanity, humanity will pursue you relentlessly, and eventually you will be held to account.

That is our solemn promise to the survivors.

The President: I thank Special Representative Bangura for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Misaka.

Ms. Misaka: I would like to thank the Security Council for this opportunity to address it at this debate on women and peace and security from a civil society perspective.

I speak today on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. I am also here in my capacity as a founding member of the South Sudanese Diaspora Association and a member of the EVE Organization for Women Development. EVE is an organization based in Juba, South Sudan, that is committed to empowering women and raising awareness about women, peace and security issues, including sexual and gender-based violence during conflict.

I speak here today with a heavy heart, as I continue to receive reports from my family, friends and my organization in South Sudan that the violence in our country has continued to increase. Women in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan internally displaced persons camp in Bor, which was attacked last week, are traumatized and devastated, and say they feel as if they are sitting there waiting to die. I am here with members in the Security Council today, but I live in fear of what will happen next in my country — and to my family. Last week in Bentiu, hundreds of men, women, and children were killed, and men are being pushed to rape women of different ethnicity.

The sexual violence we have experienced in South Sudan is indicative of the larger systemic crisis throughout the world in countries such as Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria and Myanmar. I want to acknowledge the work of civil society groups that are not present here but are fighting every day to prevent, document and respond to such crimes. I am also deeply honoured to acknowledge the civil society groups that are here today, including Ms. Naw K'nyaw Paw, another women's human rights defender who is working with sexual violence survivors in Myanmar.

Today, we call on all the relevant actors, including Member States, the Security Council, the United Nations and non-state actors, to take a greater role in the prevention and treatment of this atrocity and threat to international peace and security. I will discuss six ateas of serious concern related to the situation in South Sudan and sexual violence in all conflicts, including in those situations that are not in the focus of the international community.

First, with regard to ending impunity, the Security Council, Member States and the United Nations must take on leadership roles and actively advocate for ending impunity and promoting investigation, documentation and accountability. At this moment in South Sudan, mechanisms are being set up to investigate atrocities, including the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism of the Cessation and Hostilities Agreement. In addition, the African Union Commission of Inquiry is currently in South Sudan and will be investigating sexual

violence in conflict as part of its mandate. In all cases of conflict and in all such mechanisms, sexual violence in conflict must be on the list of types of violence to be documented. Without documentation, there will be no accountability.

In South Sudan, women are discriminated against in laws that do not meet internationally accepted standards of human and individual rights. Weak judicial systems lead to a low rate of arrests and convictions. Security and judicial professionals should receive stronger training on sexual and gender-based violence. Alleged perpetrators must be prosecuted, including those with command responsibility, and women should be active agents in judicial processes and sectors.

Secondly, we must consider comprehensive services for survivors. We call on Member States and United Nations agencies to ensure that survivors of sexual violence can access, in a timely manner, nondiscriminatory and comprehensive health services, which should include, as referenced in Security Council resolution 2122 (2013), the full range of sexual-violence and reproductive health services, HIV awareness and response and access to safe abortion, in accordance with international humanitarian law. Equally important are psychosocial, legal, livelihood assistance and other multisectoral services and appropriate services, especially for adolescent girls.

In South Sudan, survivors of sexual violence face many barriers to all those services. One challenge is that survivors do not report abuses early enough, owing to fear and stigma. They also face systemic barriers, such as poor infrastructure and the lack of health and psychosocial services. It is vitally important that the humanitarian community receive additional technical and financial resources to meet the specific needs of women and girls. In turn, the humanitarian community must ensure that the needs of women and girls are met when services are provided.

Thirdly, the prohibition of amnesty is another factor. Ceasefire agreements and peace agreements must not provide amnesty for sexual violence, as is stipulated in numerous Security Council resolutions. That in turn must not be undermined in subsequent post-conflict mechanisms, including legislative and constitutional provisions. Amnesty provisions must not make accountability for sexual-violence crimes impossible, breach international law or do nothing to deter perpetrators of sexual violence.

Fourthly, we must work towards women's meaningful participation in peace negotiations. All women must have the opportunity to participate and to have their views and needs represented in decision-making processes. That requires outreach to women who have been marginalized, including young women, indigenous women, those who have been displaced and those with disabilities. Many of those groups are at increased risk of being targeted for conflict-related sexual violence.

Although there are six women involved in the formal negotiations in South Sudan, as a result of heavy advocacy by women's groups and the international community, women are still underrepresented in the peace process. Seats at the peace table should not be reserved only for parties to the conflict. That is why my organization has developed a statement to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, with signatories from across South Sudan and Africa, calling for women's networks and organizations to be part of the peace process.

Fifthly, we must consider mission mandates. The Security Council has long recognized, most recently in its resolution 2122 (2013), that United Nations mission mandates should include strong and comprehensive language on all aspects of the women, peace and security agenda. Following armed attacks in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) camp in Bor, we have received reports from women living in the camp who do not feel safe and are requesting more protection and evacuation. Given the UNMISS mandate and the large number of women seeking refuge in UNMISS compounds and internally-displaced-persons camps, UNMISS must take serious measures to guarantee the rights of South Sudanese women and to ensure their protection. In that vein, the Security Council should urge UNMISS to ensure vetting, pre- or post-deployment training and sensitization of all troops on gender-based violence and protection.

In addition, we recognize that United Nations bodies and international humanitarian organizations need unhindered access to conflict areas. The denial of access cannot serve as an excuse for perpetrators and Governments to avoid their accountability for crimes of sexual violence.

Sixthly, we need to look at root causes. In South Sudan, all we want is peace. The prevention of conflict and dealing with its underlying causes must be given

priority, rather than waiting until it is too late. The proliferation of arms and light weapons adds to the insecurity of girls and women. We therefore call on the Security Council and all actors to focus on gender-sensitive disarmament and conflict prevention, including early warning. Member States should ratify and fully implement the Arms Trade Treaty, particularly in relation to the prevention of gender-based violence.

Finally, we remind Member States of the importance of creating space and support for independent civil society. Local women's rights groups often have the strategic and political knowledge needed to end sexual violence and are usually the first to respond to survivors. All too often, civil society is the only voice to address ongoing sexual violence in forgotten and neglected conflicts.

I leave the Council with the story of Sarah, who was interviewed by our organization in Bentiu, where her uncle was killed in front of her, her mother was burned and Sarah herself was raped. She also told us about 10 other women who were shot because they refused to be raped. We need members of the international community to work with us in South Sudan. We ask that they not forget our country, our people, our women.

The President: I thank Ms. Misaka for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Ms. Power (United States of America): Madam President, I would like thank the Secretary-General, Special Representative Bangura, and Ms. Misaka for their informative and powerful briefings.

In the past decade, the Security Council has identified the scourge of sexual violence in conflict as a matter of acute and urgent concern. We meet today to assess progress in combating that pernicious form of criminality and to consider next steps. We begin with confidence that the standards we have established are clear and the terrible knowledge that those standards are regularly being ignored. We have made abundantly clear that there should be zero tolerance for rape and zero tolerance for other forms of sexual abuse in all circumstances and at all times. The terror of sexual violence is uniquely horrific and merits our continued and determined efforts to eliminate it. Neither the fog of war nor the associated breakdown of law provide any explanation or excuse for actions that violate the rights and disrespect the fundamental dignity of human beings.

To articulate a zero-tolerance standard is, of course, not difficult. Indeed, we have done it many times. But to endow it with real meaning in real conflicts remains a challenge of great urgency and one of many dimensions. This is not work that should be delegated only to a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, even one as capable as Special Representative Bangura, or to women's protection advisers in a peacekeeping mission or to UN-Women. Those offices and officials and the United Nations as a whole assuredly have an indispensable role to play, but the key to further progress in reducing suffering and in protecting the vulnerable is action by the parties to conflict. Every Government has a responsibility to establish standards, develop institutions and pursue policies that protect its people from sexual violence, whether perpetrated by the Government's own forces or by others. That responsibility includes, as Special Representative Bangura just put it, redirecting the stigma from the survivors to the perpetrators.

That duty extends to men and boys, who have suffered sexual violence to an extent we have only recently begun to appreciate — in places like Colombia, where boys were turned into sex slaves by illegal armed groups; in Rutshuru, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which was under the savage control of the Mouvement du 23 mars for much of 2013; and in Libya, where the United Nations reported that armed brigades used rape in detention as a form of torture.

In far too many countries, the victims of sexual violence still have little, if any, effective legal recourse. Until that changes, predators will not be deterred, victims will hesitate to come forward and justice will remain beyond reach. In places where Governments are weak, we must help to improve their capabilities while also holding accountable those who commit crimes. Among the most culpable are the ruthless militias in the Central African Republic, whose assaults on civilians have almost literally torn the country apart, and where rape, forced marriage and sexual slavery are widespread; in Burma, where there are widespread reports of soldiers raping women and girls; and, as we have just heard, in South Sudan, where only this week militants have gone on the radio — radio, which my Rwandan colleague has called an evil multiplier — to incite the use of sexual violence against named ethnic groups; in Yemen, where child protection workers have attested to the abduction and abuse of boys by Ansar Al-Sharia. With all of that in mind, we should express special outrage at the continued and widespread incidence of sexual abuse

practised by Syrian Government armed forces as part of the regime's ruthless campaign to terrorize civilians and drive families from their homes.

Despite chronic underreporting and difficulties of access, we know more about the nature and scope of the problem than ever before. The Secretary-General's report (S/2014/181), the information-collection mechanisms on which it is based, and the steadfast leadership shown by Special Representative Bangura are all welcome developments. In addressing sexual violence, the United Nations must set the right example in what it does both here in New York and in places around the world where tensions are high and United Nations peacekeepers or political missions are deployed. Ms. Bangura has shown determination in coordinating United Nations efforts across agencies in order to ensure that the imperative of putting a stop to sexual violence is addressed in training, included in mission mandates and reports, and becomes a central focus of enforcement activities and a major part of holding perpetrators accountable for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

As members of the Security Council, however, we must do our part by exercising proper oversight and pushing for the full implementation of the objectives we set, mission by mission. In that connection, I note that women protection advisers were deployed last year to Somalia and Mali, and are expected this year in the Sudan, South Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic. In Somalia, the United Nations has helped to train 12,000 police officers, and the Government has supported the increased recruitment of women police. An improved effort has also been made to strengthen investigative and prosecutorial capabilities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where sexual violence perpetrated by Government and rebel forces has long been a source of chronic and massive injustice.

We must also strive to help the Secretariat achieve its goal of 20 per cent female participation among United Nations police. But for that to happen, each of our countries must themselves increase their recruitment of women police into their domestic forces, so that there is a far broader pool on which the United Nations can draw. We must also insist on enforcing the absolute prohibition on sexual abuse by United Nations peacekeepers. Again, that requires that home countries hold perpetrators of sexual violence accountable once they are sent home.

In conclusion, I would like to voice the strong support of my Government and of the American people for a concerted strategy across the globe to address the problem of sexual violence, both in and outside combat situations. For far too long, such abuses have been treated as part of the spoils of victory or the rewards of physical might. Let us be clear: sexual abuse is among the worst of crimes, because it robs people of the precious and inalienable right to be secure in their bodies and because it is inflicted out of cruelty. In our efforts to stop it, we have made gains in recent years, but we have a very long way to go.

Mr. Barros (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile would like to thank the Nigerian presidency for convening this open debate on sexual violence in conflict. We would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for their briefings. And we are grateful to Ms. Rhoda Misak for her statement, which calls us to act decisively to prevent and eradicate this scourge and the stigma that goes with it, and to ensure the restoration and reintegration of its survivors.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the representative of Austria on behalf of the Human Security Network, of which my country is a member.

We would like to highlight the priority that the Secretary-General has accorded this subject since the publication in 2006 of his report on the "In-depth study on all forms of violence against women" (A/61/122/Add.1), which addressed sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. In the eight years since then, we have adopted resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010) and 2106 (2013), all sponsored by Chile, and whose implementation will contribute to the Secretary- General's recommendations in the report before us today (S/2014/181). That comprehensive, multisectoral and multidimensional report, and its preventive and protective framework, will enable us to establish early-warning mechanisms and appropriate responses. We commend the field visits the Special Representative has conducted and the commitments made by national and regional authorities to the United Nations system, which have been reflected in resolutions renewing mandates. We would also like to highlight the Special Representative's recent visit to the Central African Republic, during which President

Samba-Panza renewed the commitment expressed in the 2012 joint communiqué.

Such efforts must be backed up by holding perpetrators of sexual violence to account and combating their impunity. The International Criminal Court is an important complement to the work of national courts and hybrid tribunals in this area, as we saw in the trial of Jean-Pierre Bemba and the voluntary surrender and subsequent arrest of Bosco Ntaganda. The proliferation of arms has helped to create an environment conducive to this type of violence. Chile, aware of the problems associated with that proliferation, has signed the Arms Trade Treaty and urges other States to support it.

Chile welcomes the policy and operational recommendations for preventing and eradicating this type of violence, and stresses that primary responsibility in this area belongs to the States concerned. In that regard, we would like to emphasize the importance of multidisciplinary, timely and non-discriminatory assistance to survivors of sexual violence, including children born of such violence, of ensuring targeted and appropriate services for children and adults and of promoting survivors' empowerment and reintegration. We call on all parties to conflicts who are responsible for, or suspected of, committing acts of sexual violence, including those listed in the report, to put a stop to such violations and make concrete and time-bound commitments to protect. Mediators and envoys involved in mediation, ceasefire, peace and preventive diplomacy processes must be properly trained in this area and ensure that peace agreements contain concrete provisions concerning them, including ensuring adequate preservation of the evidence of such crimes.

Preventive measures should be explicitly reflected in the processes of security sector reform, of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and of justice reform initiatives in areas such as capacity and policing. We reiterate the important role of reporting, prevention, protection and reintegration played by civil society, including women's organizations, community leaders, religious leaders, the media and human rights activists, and we support the efforts of the system to build the capacity of these groups.

The situation of internally displaced persons and refugees — who are particularly vulnerable to this type of violence, which is often used as a tactic to induce displacement — is of concern to the Council. Chile is organizing, together with Australia and with the support of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, an Arria formula meeting on the protection of internally displaced persons on 30 May.

Chile supports the systematic inclusion of the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence and its follow-up in the relevant country-specific resolutions and in the mandates of special political and peacekeeping missions. These missions, commissions of inquiry and other related mechanisms should consider including women protection advisers. We also look forward to the possibility of including this issue in the work of the monitoring bodies of the relevant Security Council sanctions.

As the Secretary-General recommends, we urge the consideration of the links between conflict-related sexual violence and the illicit trade in natural resources, as well as such illegal activities as the illicit drugs trade and the traffic in persons covered by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, its protocols and relevant legal instruments.

We stress the importance of deepening the exchange of information among the system's actors and strengthening the training of all peacekeeping personnel using innovative tools, among others, those of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and the corresponding United Nations initiative. We encourage the international community and donors to support the prevention and eradication of the scourge through the United Nations Action Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

At the regional level, in July 2013 Chile's Joint Peacekeeping Operations Centre, together with the United States Naval Postgraduate School, organized a seminar in Santiago on theme "Women, peace and security: new challenges to implementation of resolution 1325 (2000)", with the participation of regional professionals. It included training in gender-based sexual violence and resolution 2106 (2013), inter alia. At the national level, the Centre's 2014 curriculum addresses resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions and the prevention of abuse and sexual exploitation, with a focus on the norms expected of peacekeeping personnel.

Sexual violence continues to be used to humiliate opponents in conflict, as a form of torture, to inflict injury, to extract information, to stigmatize, degrade and intimidate, to destroy communities, to displace communities and groups from their land, and to intentionally spread HIV or reward fighters. We cannot

continue to ignore the scourge and reiterate our firm determination to implement resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions on such violence, while supporting efforts towards its prompt eradication and the healing and reintegration of victims and survivors.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/181) and personal leadership against sexual violence in conflict, and Special Representative Bangura for her fearlessness. Both have been instrumental in driving the unprecedented global commitment we have to ending conflict-related sexual violence. But the challenge, as we know, simply never ceases.

Last week in South Sudan, we witnessed the horror of radio-broadcast hate speech inciting rape and sexual violence against women and girls as a brutal weapon of war. It is very dangerous being a women or a girl when the rule of law fails and insecurity prevails. I also thank Ms. Misaka for her briefing, which has been a good and inspirational reminder of how essential it is that the entire international community — the Council, Governments, regional organizations, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations — work collaboratively and actively to combat sexual violence. We support regular briefings to the Council by such experts.

The international prohibition on sexual violence in conflict is long-standing, but our plan for combating it has not previously been laid out. That is why the advances last year were so important. Those include the adoption of resolution 2106 (2013), setting out a comprehensive prevention framework, and the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, signed now by over 140 nations. We congratulate the United Kingdom and Foreign Secretary Hague on their efforts on the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, in which Australia's Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, is an active champion.

Our challenge, now as always, is implementation — turning the resolutions into solutions, as Ms. Bangura has just said. Fundamental to that is timely and comprehensive information. Unhindered humanitarian access is essential, as are measures to fight the stigma and threats of reprisal against survivors, which impede its reporting. Increasing the numbers of women in peacekeeping missions and police units can help, and we must address barriers to their recruitment, deployment and retention. We must ensure the early deployment of women protection advisers in United Nations missions.

Commitments on the part of Governments and parties to conflict to combating sexual violence are crucial to change on the ground. We commend Special Representative Bangura for securing new commitments with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia. Reaching armed groups is hard, but we must try. Ceasefire agreements should always include sexual violence as a prohibited act.

Specific actions to prevent sexual violence must be included in security sector reform, rule of law initiatives and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. As resolution 2117 (2013) recognized, the misuse of small arms and light weapons exacerbates sexual violence, and we call on all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty.

There must be situation-specific training for all peacekeeping personnel, including military and police, that addresses the full range of sexual violence crimes, including abductions, forced marriage and sexual slavery. Particular attention must also be given to the needs of the most vulnerable populations, including the marginalized, children, older persons, indigenous communities, people with disabilities and displaced persons. The needs of men and boy survivors must also be considered.

As Ms. Misaka reminded the Council this morning, it is crucial that survivors have quick access to comprehensive services, including sexual and reproductive health services and psychosocial, legal and livelihood support. We must confront the issue of pregnancy as a result of rape, particularly where abortion services are illegal and the health consequences of unsafe abortion and a lack of maternity care are dire. Civil society and women's organizations providing services and giving political voice to women affected by conflict must also be adequately resourced.

Australian Foreign Minister Bishop announced in Jordan this week a $20-million contribution to the United Nations "No lost generation" initiative to support Syrian refugee children, including child survivors of sexual violence. Sexual violence is a persistent and deliberate feature of the conflict in Syria, brutalizing civilians and displacing populations, and is a constant threat in the refugee camps, themselves.

Decisively, we must move beyond just the immediate or short-term provision of support, vital though it is.

Empowering survivors with their own economic future can be a transformative way to reconstruct their lives. Obviously, accountability is centrally important. States must accept their primary obligation to investigate and prosecute sexual violence crimes, provide support for survivors and protect witnesses who testify. Teams of experts working to support local justice mechanisms can have lasting impacts. As part of the regional peacebuilding mission to Solomon Islands, Australia has mentored female Solomon Islands police to take victim statements, compile evidence and support survivors throughout court processes. Such models are naturally being applied elsewhere and should have broad application.

Where national jurisdictions are unable or unwilling to prosecute perpetrators, the Council should consider referrals to the International Criminal Court. Targeted Council sanctions have a clear role to play — to expose and circumscribe the perpetrators and create a powerful deterrent to others. The current events in South Sudan encapsulate the challenges we face in that regard. In consultations two days ago, the Security Council was told the exact times and the content of the media broadcasts inciting rape and the names of the individuals who made them. We must ensure that they are held to account.

To conclude, the Security Council's debate on sexual violence may only take place once a year, but our work to end that barbaric practice — that crime — must be a daily commitment and attract our serious attention across the whole of our agenda. The Council must take every opportunity available and use every tool it has to end that abhorrent crime and provide survivors the justice and services they need to rebuild their lives.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank Nigeria for the initiative of organizing today's open debate. I wish to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Special Representative Bangura for their briefings. We also listened carefully to the statement just made by the representative of the non-governmental organization.

In recent years, thanks to the joint efforts of the United Nations and the international community, countries in conflict have achieved substantial progress in preventing fighting sexual violence and supporting the rights of women in conflict. However, in many armed conflicts in today's world, vulnerable groups, including women, continue to bear the brunt of the consequences of war. The practice remains rampant where the threat of violence has been used as a method of war. That constitutes not only a serious affront to the rights and dignity of women, but also flagrant challenge to the peaceful reconstruction efforts of the countries concerned and shocks the human conscience; it therefore should be fought by the international community in a concerted manner.

China condemns and opposes all violence against civilians in armed conflict, including sexual violence. We call for the comprehensive implementation of the Councils resolutions and urge the parties to conflict to respect international human rights law and relevant international law, immediately stop all sexual violence and take concrete actions to protect the security and rights of vulnerable groups, including women and children.

I would now like to stress the following three points.

First, the fight against sexual violence and armed conflict should depend mainly on the efforts of the affected countries. Relevant national Governments bear the primary responsibility for implementing Council resolutions and fighting sexual violence in conflict. The international community, including the United Nations, should fully respect the sovereignty and will of the affected countries. They should focus on helping with the capacity-building of those countries and resolve the financing and technical difficulties they encounter.

It is important to put into practice the principles referred to in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/181), namely, national ownership, national leadership and national responsibility. It is also important to encourage and support the efforts carried out by the affected countries in prevention and resolution of issues arising from sexual violence in armed conflict.

Secondly, in addressing issues involving women and peace and security, including sexual violence, the relevant organs of the United Nations should respect the division of labour and work in a concerted manner. As the primary organ for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council should focus on conflict prevention, peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding so as to create an enabling political and security environment for reducing and eliminating sexual violence in armed conflict. The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council,

the Human Rights Council and UN-Women should each leverage its advantage and work closely with the Council so as to create synergy. The Council should strictly abide by its relevant mandate in dealing with sexual violence and avoid stepping into areas of responsibility enjoyed by other organs. United Nations missions should also observe Council mandates in carrying out security sector reform and post-conflict peacebuilding. It is important to pay special attention to strengthening communication and cooperation with the countries concerned.

Thirdly, special attention should be given to addressing the root causes of sexual violence in armed conflict. To prevent and curb sexual violence in armed conflict, punishment and monitoring have to be strengthened. It is also important to tackle the root causes that are the breeding ground for conflicts. It is important to promote the overall economic and social development of the countries concerned and maintain political security and stability to enhance the status of women and achieve women's empowerment. The international community should scale up its assistance to women's development in those countries.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): I thank you, Madam, for convening today's important debate. I would like to express my delegation's sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Special Representative Zainab Hawa Bangura and non-governmental organization representative Rhoda Misaka for their briefings and statements.

We have made progress over the past several years in combatting conflict-related sexual violence. Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) in particular, a gender perspective has been increasingly integrated into key United Nations mandates.

In spite of those institutional gains, sexual violence in conflict remains one of the most egregious forms of human rights violations. Its impact goes far beyond an individual victim's pain and stigma. Even more troubling is the fact that sexual violence is often used as a tactic of armed conflict. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/181), sexual violence is wielded to attack specific ethnic and religious groups, used to displace civilians and unleashed to encourage predatory behaviour. The international community must scale up its collective efforts to combat the scourge, especially in the three areas of prevention, protection and prosecution.

First, we must strengthen the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence, establishing legal frameworks, promoting improved governance and the rule of law and raising public awareness; those are just some examples of the concrete actions we need to take. In that way, we believe that the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, to be held in London in June, will provide an opportunity to mobilize political commitments and promote public awareness. In addition, the participation of women together with the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in conflict resolution and peace processes should be ensured. Women can and must play multiple roles during periods of armed conflicts, as they often demonstrate resilience and ingenuity in the face of extreme adversity.

Secondly, we should pay increased attention to the protection of women facing rape, sexual slavery and other forms sexual violence in conflict. Building the capacity of national institutions and promoting relevant legislation and resource allocation are prerequisites for providing sustainable assistance to victims and survivors. At the same time, we must enhance international frameworks and tangible measures to protect women suffering from sexual violence in conflict. In that regard, we recognize the crucial role of peacekeeping operations and women protection advisers.

Thirdly, the politics of impunity should be terminated through the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of sexual violence. We cannot eradicate conflict-related sexual violence completely without bringing those responsible to justice. We note the contributions of the Team of Experts-Rule of Law/Sexual Violence in Conflict in building national capacity and expanding expertise in addressing impunity. The international justice system, including the International Criminal Court, should also play a leading role in ensuring accountability.

To conclude, the Republic of Korea as a strong supporter of resolution 1325 (2000) and the preventing sexual violence initiative reaffirms its commitment to international efforts to combat sexual-related violence.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam President, for having convened this debate on such an important issue. I thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/181). I thank Ms. Bangura, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ms. Rhoda Misak for

their statements, and I welcome their tremendous work in the fight against sexual violence.

Women are routinely subjected, to different degrees in various societies, to physical, sexual and psychological violence, and are even further victimized in situations of conflict to all sorts of brutal aggression. Despite several years of intensive action on the part of the international community, whose commitment and determination to fight sexual violence I welcome, women unfortunately continue to be victims of such violence the world over, wherever conflicts occur. The number of countries cited in the report of the Secretary-General is tangible proof of this.

States must uphold their obligations to prosecute those who perpetrate such violence and ensure that the victims of sexual violence enjoy equal protection under the law and access to justice. There can be no place for impunity within frameworks seeking to achieve lasting peace, justice, and national truth and reconciliation. When national judicial systems fail, the perpetrators of sexual violence should be subject to prosecution under international criminal justice, the jurisprudence of which when it comes to such violence represents a major step forward. Chad believes that all States are obligated to implement the principle of zero tolerance when it comes to sexual violence against women and girls. In this regard, we would like to welcome the stringent zero -olerance policy applied by the United Nations regarding cases of sexual violence perpetrated by members of peacekeeping contingents.

The repercussions of sexual violence for women and their loved ones are enormous, and the victims are changed for life by what they have suffered. Not only do they often find themselves left alone with no medical or psychosocial assistance, but they are obliged to remain silent in the face of threats against them and any witnesses. The fight against sexual violence in conflict requires victims and witnesses to be protected so as to allow them to report the perpetrators of these crimes. Likewise, efforts should incorporate information, training and awareness-raising to enhance the prevention of sexual violence through capacity-building for States and other relevant stakeholders. In this regard, Chad welcomes the crucial role played by the United Nations and civil society, and encourages them to strengthen their warning systems and their cooperation with regional and subregional organizations with a view to fine-tuning a comprehensive response to issues related to sexual violence.

The wake-up calls issued by the adoption of the various resolutions of sexual violence marked significant progress that must be further strengthened by the effective implementation of all of the measures they provide for. Chad recognizes the central role women can play in efforts towards peace and security in situations of conflict. Their active participation at all levels of decision-making and in the prevention and settlement of conflicts, in brokering peace and in post-conflict peacebuilding is of great importance.

In conclusion, I must underscore that the ongoing struggle towards peace and security to build a better future for the world can attain its goals only if all forms of violence against women in general, and sexual violence in conflict in particular — which are war crimes and crimes against humanity — are eradicated.

Mr. Maes (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I welcome your initiative, Madam President, to convene under the presidency of Nigeria this open debate on sexual violence in conflict. The Secretary-General's presentation and his regular participation in open debates on this topic show the commitment to the fight against sexual violence at the highest level within the United Nations. I would also like to thank the Special Representative, Ms. Zainab Bangura, for her intervention, and especially for the exemplary work she is carrying out with the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. I would like to assure them of the full support of my delegation. Our thanks go too to Ms. Rhoda Misak, who compellingly gave voice to civil society — an indispensable partner in the fight against sexual violence. I fully associate myself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Since our last open debate on sexual violence in June 2013 (see S/PV.6984), new conflicts have broken out and others have intensified. The magnitude of the phenomenon has intensified proportionately, showing, unfortunately, that sexual violence goes hand in hand with conflict. I refer to the conflict in Darfur, which continues to deteriorate, and to that in South Sudan, where, as Ms. Misak has just outlined, the fighting that erupted since 15 December 2013 has led to serious violations of human rights, including a great number of cases of sexual violence. I refer, too, to the Central African Republic, where sexual violence has been the main feature of the attacks carried out against the civilian population since March 2013.

In Syria, sexual violence has been a constant since the beginning of the conflict. The independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic gathered information showing that Government forces and affiliated militias have committed sexual violence, including rape, in detention centres and prisons across the country, often during interrogations conducted by intelligence services. We also know that certain armed groups in Syria have also committed such violence. All of these conflicts and the other situations addressed in the annual report of the Secretary-General lead us to the conclusion that the Security Council must remain mobilized in the face of these despicable practices that deliberately target civilian populations and destroy the social fabric of entire communities.

Last year's open debate focused on the fight against impunity. That topic remains relevant. It is at the heart of our efforts to end sexual violence. Condemning the perpetrators of sexual violence does not mean only punishing the guilty parties but also preventing future violence, righting wrongs and doing justice by victims and survivors. The international community must step up its efforts to support national authorities to assume their responsibility in the fight against impunity. The partnership between Justice Rapid Response, UN-Women and the Institute for International Criminal Investigations is a good example of what can be done. Luxembourg supports that partnership, which has made it possible to establish a list of specialized experts who can be rapidly deployed to lead and participate in investigations and to provide assistance to the victims of acts of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict settings.

Along with strengthening national capacities, there must be continued support for international criminal justice so it can play its role in cases where States either fail to live up to their obligations or lack the will to do so. I would like to reiterate the importance that Luxembourg attaches to the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Security Council is responsible for considering all of the means at its disposal to combat sexual violence, including referral to the ICC.

In recent years, the information available to us on cases of sexual violence has increased in both quantity and quality. Procedures for the monitoring, analysis and communication of information on sexual violence have begun to be implemented following the adoption of resolution 1960 (2010). It would be advisable to accelerate the implementation of those procedures, as envisaged in resolution 2106 (2013). It is also critical that advisors on the protection of women continue to be deployed in a systematic way. The Security Council should also ensure that it systematically takes into account the prevention of sexual violence in framing country-specific resolutions and in considering the renewal of the mandates of peacekeeping missions and special policy missions.

We commend applaud the efforts of the United Nations campaign against sexual violence conflict, headed by Ms. Bangura, in particular the preparation of early warning indicators for cases of conflict-related sexual violence addressed by United Nations missions in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan.

The struggle against sexual violence can succeed only if the States concerned, the United Nations and all its Member States mobilize and unify their efforts. In that context, we welcome the signature on the sidelines of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly of the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. That initiative, which has since been endorsed by more than 140 countries, shows the will of the international community to put an end to that scourge. We hope that the June follow-up Global Summit in London will lead to the adoption of further specific commitments.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that Luxembourg will maintain its firm commitment to ensuring that the struggle against sexual violence is taken into account as a priority by the Council and that the Council's resolutions are translated into solutions on the ground, to borrow Ms. Bangura's expression.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this debate. I also thank the Secretary-General, his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as Ms. Rhoda Misaka, representing civil society in South Sudan. I would also like to align my country with the statement of the European Union.

Sexual violence is a weapon as old as war itself. Thanks to the action of civil society, our Council has been seized of the matter and broken the complicit silence that has surrounded that abominable crime. However, this is not the time to celebrate. We have failed to protect civilians in Syria. Women, men and

children are being sexually abused there, even as we speak. France, as is well known, is working on a draft resolution that would make it possible to refer the main perpetrators and instigators of such crimes, whoever they may be, to the International Criminal Court.

Although I have spoken of our failure in Syria, the fight against sexual violence has also had its share of victories. First, we have put an end to silence. From a silent form of evil that was understood to be an inherent part of war, we have made sexual violence an issue affecting international peace and security. In that regard, the creation of the mandate of the Special Representative has been critical to enhancing the international visibility of the issue. She can speak directly to Governments at the highest level and is able to present problems that they have often preferred to ignore.

That political work is based on mechanisms that provide us with information and awareness, which are indispensable tools for action. Women protection advisers within peacekeeping and political missions are the cornerstone of that endeavour. In the Central African Republic, where the State has collapsed and everything needs to be rebuilt, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission has a strong mandate to protect civil and human rights, including with respect to sexual violence, thanks to the deployment of women protection advisers.

In a second success, shame has changed sides. It now weighs on the executioner and not on the victim. The Secretary-General's list of shame exposes to the whole international community the parties that are using sexual violence in an orchestrated and systematic manner and provides United Nations missions with a solid basis for initiating a dialogue with such groups.

We should draw the logical conclusions from such changes and prioritize the struggle against impunity with respect to sexual violence. That task redounds above all to Governments, which have the responsibility to prosecute and punish. We must be vigilant in that regard; too often, States announce with great fanfare — and development agencies fall into line with support — the establishment of special courts, special prosecutors and extraordinary laws, which serve only to cover up their lack of political will. We have witnessed that over many years in Darfur. When States fail to comply, the International Criminal Court, whose jurisdiction is universal, can and must fulfil its role.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, impunity with respect to mass rapes has long been the rule. There has recently been a degree of progress. That is why we call upon the Congolese authorities to pursue their efforts to prosecute those responsible for the rapes in Minova, including the commanders of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, with the necessary rigour. An exemplary judgement in that affair would send a message to all Congolese troops that the era of impunity has come to an end. We welcome the technical support being provided to the trials currently under way by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, whose mandate for the protection of civilians has recently been strengthened.

None of those changes can take root if we do not fully implement the mandate established by the resolutions on women and peace and security by ensuring the full and complete participation of women in the settlement of conflicts. In the framework of its national action plan, France has launched programmes of cooperation on the matter of sexual violence and in favour of women's political and economic empowerment in Africa and the Arab world, in partnership with UN-Women, especially in Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Before concluding, I would like to add one point that remains important for France. In peacetime, but even more so during war, access to sexual and reproductive health services is indispensable. We know that women and girls exposed to sexual violence run the risk of premature and unwanted pregnancies. The risk of maternal mortality in such circumstances rises tenfold. The refusal to provide abortion services represents a violation of one of the principles of international humanitarian law, which covers non-discrimination with respect to the provision of medical services to victims. Such discrimination, which adds a terrible injustice to women who have been the victims of sexual violence, must be brought to an end.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I thank you, Madame President, for convening this important debate today. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/181), and in particular Special Representative Bangura, her staff, the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, and United Nations country teams around the world for their continual efforts to raise awareness and to tackle sexual violence in conflict.

I warmly welcome Ms. Rhoda Misaka from South Sudan and the recommendations that she has made. I look forward to hearing the statement that the African Union ambassador will make on behalf of Ms. Bineta Diop, whose appointment as Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security makes clear the importance that the African Union places on the most vulnerable victims of conflict, including the victims of sexual violence.

The Secretary-General's report is alarming. He is right — this crime is as destructive as any bomb. With data from all over the world, the report demonstrates that sexual violence is prevalent and a matter of profound importance to international peace and security. When unpunished, such crimes sow the seeds for future conflict, perpetuate violence and undermine the prospects for sustainable development. If implemented, the report's recommendations, based on resolution 2106 (2013), will improve support for survivors, reduce the space for impunity and help prevent future crimes.

Today I want to make three particular points. First, preventing and redressing sexual violence in conflict is integral to the wider work on conflict prevention and a moral duty for the Governments and citizens of a civilized world. As Special Representative Bangura put it, it is a great moral duty of our time. Many United Nations agencies, women's and civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and human rights defenders work diligently day by day to achieve this. But their efforts can succeed only if Governments commit their support and work together in a coordinated way to enable robust mechanisms for documenting and investigating acts of sexual violence, greater support to survivors, increased gender-based responses and security sector reform, and greater international coordination. If we are serious about eradicating sexual violence in conflict, we must resource the fight. We must also eradicate the root causes of this inhumane crime, including gender inequality, discrimination and false perceptions of masculinity.

Secondly, the United Nations leading role in this is absolutely critical. The breadth of United Nations activity is impressive and it is also having an impact. The United Kingdom supports all the United Nations work and encourages United Nations agencies to deliver as one in their efforts to support States in fulfilling their responsibilities. Tackling sexual violence must also be at the heart of strong protection-of-civilians mandates in United Nations peacekeeping operations, which are primarily delivered through military and police personnel. We welcome the deployment of women protection advisers in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and look forward to their deployment in the Central African Republic and other missions.

Thirdly, as noted in the report, my Foreign Secretary and the whole British Government remain committed to this cause. In just over six weeks time, Foreign Secretary William Hague and Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, will co-chair the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. The goal is to end the culture of impunity for the use of sexual violence both as a tool and as a side effect of war worldwide. In line with the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, the summit will identify specific actions by the international community where we believe greater progress is necessary. That will include a number of conflict and post-conflict affected States. We hope they will use this platform to set out their plans and activity for combating sexual violence.

Collectively we must change the calculus of anyone who thinks that they can use the fog of war as cover to get away with rape and other forms of sexual abuse. We must shift the stigma for such crimes from the victim to the perpetrator. We must ensure there is nowhere to hide for those guilty of grave violations of human rights. We must, as Special Representative Bangura said, hold perpetrators accountable. Where violations do occur, we must empower survivors to speak out, safe in the knowledge that they will be supported and protected and able to access services and legal redress.

I am pleased that since the publication of the Secretary-General's report on 13 March, Chad, Lesotho, Saint Lucia, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, have all endorsed the Declaration of Commitment, taking the number of endorsing countries to 145. That is hugely encouraging. We look forward to welcoming all endorsing countries to the London summit in June. The United Kingdom strongly encourages countries that have no yet endorsed, particularly those on the Security Council, to do so as soon as possible and to attend the summit.

Under the Charter, the Security Council has the primary responsibilty for the maintenance of

international peace and security. We know that we can improve international peace and security if we eliminate sexual violence in conflict, and we have the opportunity to do so. Through the June Summit, next year's high-level review of resolution 1325 (2000) and the building of the sustainable development goals, the Security Council and Member States can make progress towards ending this terrible crime. We should all now commit to that goal.

Mrs. Kazragienė (Lithuania): Let me begin by expressing our appreciation to the Nigerian presidency for convening an open debate on conflict-related sexual violence, an issue that plagues and exacerbates many contemporary conflicts.

We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2014/181) and recommendations, including the country-specific ones, and the updated annex on suspected perpetrators. We also sincerely commend Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and her team all over the world for their hard work and dedication, as well as the members of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Friends of 1325 and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. Our sincere congratulations go to Ms. Bineta Diop, the first African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, on her recent appointment.

At the outset, Lithuania aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by observer of the European Union.

Despite all of the efforts of the international community and the establishment of legal and normative frameworks, including seven Security Council resolutions, conflict-related sexual violence is on the rise. It is getting more complex. It is used to displace civilian populations, to seize land and property and to illicitly extract natural resources. Children are sexually assaulted and suffer from stigma when born out of rape. Young girls are trafficked, forced to marry rebels and used as messengers. Boys and men are subjected to sexualized violence. Sexual violence has become a tactic and weapon of war and impunity prevails. The only way to effectively address this scourge is a comprehensive and integrated approach which entails prevention, early warning, justice, accountability, the participation of women in political processes and economic empowerment.

The inclusion of provisions on sexual violence in the Arms Trade Treaty is just one of the recent encouraging examples of action in that regard. In its turn the Security Council, in resolution 2106 (2013) — the fourth resolution focused on conflict-related sexual violence — has reaffirmed the centrality of gender equality and women's political, social and economic empowerment to preventing sexual violence and further developed the operational framework on conflict-related sexual violence. Among other operational provisions, it calls for the further deployment of women protection advisers and gender advisers to the relevant United Nations peacekeeping and political missions, as well as humanitarian operations.

The Security Council has also recognized the need for more systematic monitoring and more timely, objective, accurate and reliable information as a basis for prevention and response. The Security Council's support of the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence has contributed to a better understanding of the scope and roots of the problem and facilitated a more proactive stance of United Nations teams on the ground. Having more robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms, the Security Council could also consider developing a procedure that would ensure systematic monitoring of the implementation of its decisions and commitments taken up by parties to conflict.

At the same time, the lack of adequate national capacity and expertise to prevent, investigate and prosecute violence remain among the main impediments in combating sexual violence and ensuring accountability. We are encouraged by the United Nations efforts to assist the strengthening of national capacities. We welcome the extremely important work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, which is being rapidly deployed in situations of particular concern with respect to sexual violence in armed conflict to assist national authorities in strengthening the rule of law.

Another concrete and laudable example is the joint UN-Women/Justice Rapid Response training, roster management, and deployment mechanism established upon a request of the Secretary-General to ensure that each commission of inquiry is provided with expertise on investigations of sexual and gender-based violence. It is also of paramount importance that peacekeepers continue to be trained to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence, and that special

training materials be prepared, preferably in the native languages of peacekeepers. Peacekeeping forces must ensure that internally displaced persons camps are free of alleged perpetrators. The United Nations Blue Helmets themselves must strictly follow the rules of conduct.

Lithuania strongly supports the Group of Eight declaration on preventing sexual violence in conflict, and we are glad to learn that over 140 States have already endorsed the declaration of commitment that was introduced in New York in September 2013. Lithuania looks forward to the global summit in London in June this year, where specific actions are to be identified and agreed.

However broad and strong it may be, international assistance will not provide sustainable results unless it is complemented by national commitment. National political leaders have a major role to play in ensuring that international law is transposed into national law and implemented. National ownership and responsibility should be key priorities. We welcome the facilitation of national responsibility efforts through the joint communiqués between the United Nations and the Governments of the Central African Republic, Côte D'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea and Somalia, as per the Secretary-General's report.

We note with appreciation that women, peace and security issues are included in the Secretary-General's country-specific reports under a separate heading. The Security Council could also consistently include the women, peace and security agenda in the terms of reference of its visiting missions. As the Council continues to horizontally integrate the issues of sexual violence into its work, including in the drafting or renewing mandates of United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions, relevant sanctions committees must review their listing and de-listing guidelines, add sexual violence to their lists of criteria, harmonize designation criteria for listed individuals by including any relevant charges from international justice mechanisms, consider sanctioning parties identified by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The Council at its disposal has and should actively consider other means to ensure accountability, such as a referrals to the International Criminal Court, special tribunals and commissions of inquiry.

The International Commission of Inquiry on the Central African Republic should provide all relevant information to the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) in order to list the perpetrators and send a strong signal that all offenders will be held accountable. The capacity of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic to monitor and report human rights violations, including sexual violence, must also be enhanced.

The sexual violence in Syria against women and men, including in Government detention facilities; non-State armed groups targeting female family members of Government forces; and more than 300 cases of gender-based violence in three health clinics in Damascus and Rural Damascus alone are clear violations of international humanitarian law and resolution 2139 (2014). We support referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. Only by using all available tools at our hands will we be able to prevent further violence and end this vicious cycle of impunity. The experience in combating conflict-related sexual violence in the Central African Republic, Syria and many other countries, as reported by the Secretary-General, shows that the United Nations has to find meaningful ways to engage non-State actors.

Finally, let me touch upon the issue of survivors. Care for and protection of survivors of sexual violence are another vital issue to address in order to fight stigmatization and reprisals and prevent violence and impunity in the future. We believe that reparations could significantly contribute to restoring justice, especially when other means are not feasible.

Twenty years after the end of the Balkan War, an estimated 20,000 survivors of crimes of sexual violence have not seen justice. The alleged perpetrators enjoy positions of influence while victims and their children born of rape are left to suffer stigmatization and shame. Women were excluded from the peace negotiations, even though women's organizations were the first to initiate meetings with people from the other side, trying to find common ground and ways to stop the violence. That is the probable reason why the Dayton peace accords did not include the provisions recommended in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action.

Indeed, our toolbox is full of useful instruments but it is now time to take matters into our own hands, consolidate our actions on the ground and deliver together and in close cooperation with all humanitarian, diplomatic, justice, security and civil society actors.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan): We are grateful to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative Zeinab Bangura and Ms. Rhoda Misaka for their important comments and insights this morning, and for the outstanding work undertaken by Special Representative Bangura and her dedicated staff.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2014/181) makes for grim reading, and very clearly there is much we, the Member States concerned, need to do. And in that context, when it comes to the presence of Syrian refugees in Jordan and their vulnerabilities, as alluded to in the report, even though we note that the principal refugee camp for Syrians falls under the supervision of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Jordanian Government accepts full responsibility for whatever may happen on its territory and is committed to ensuring the security of all refugees, especially women and children. Naturally, we condemn any attempt by any individual or individuals to exploit them. We also need help — much more help — and perhaps we will soon reach a stage at which other countries with real capacities may consider sharing the burden and accepting greater numbers of Syrian refugees than is presently the case.

Turning to the Secretary-General's recommendations, I join others in stating that it is pointless discussing accountability for sexual crimes perpetrated against women, girls and boys unless we do two things. The first is our need to properly understand the extent to which functioning courts are second only in importance to the provision of security and on an equal footing with humanitarian considerations when it comes to the United Nations involvement in conflict or post-conflict environments. Without a properly resourced single vehicle for the delivery of legal and judicial support, the United Nations will continue to fall short in delivering what it should to distressed communities. Secondly, the International Criminal Court needs to be supported by the Council to the hilt, and no serious discussion on combating the worst forms of sexual violence can be obtained from a Council unwilling to do that.

Finally, I ask once again the painful question of whether we as a collective membership, bound together in this Organization by its Charter, actually have the credibility to offer strong opinions on this subject matter? Do we have the credibility when all of us have refused to undertake the complete range of actions necessary to ensure that sexual exploitation and abuse by our own peacekeepers — United Nations peacekeepers — is reduced to zero? Can we not be accused by others of hypocrisy when in this Chamber we rightly condemn all expressions of conflict-related sexual violence committed against women, girls and boys, and speak of them as criminal and intolerable — as we have done for 14 years now — while down the hall, only a few metres from here in the Sixth Committee, we do next to nothing, year in year out, on the draft convention on criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission — a draft that has been on the agenda of the Sixth Committee since 2007.

Let us be clear about what it is we are saying by our inaction. We are saying that it is okay by us when a United Nations civilian staff member commits rape in a United Nations peacekeeping mission, where the host country has no functioning judiciary and when the country of nationality cannot exercise its criminal jurisdiction extraterritorially over the accused because it has no law allowing it to do so. Is that our view? Rapes perpetrated by United Nations civilian staff members in that context can go unpunished? That is precisely what it is we are saying, year after year. Please do not think those crimes have not happened, because they have.

Do we have any credibility when we also insist that the United Nations has no business in relation to the conduct of investigations for alleged crimes committed by our own United Nations uniformed peacekeepers, knowing that in the past we, the Member States, were not reliable enough in guaranteeing that justice be done in respect of the victims? Are we credible when in the last reporting period of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) we still had 42 cases of sexual exploitation and abuse involving United Nations peacekeepers being investigated by that Office? By now, some nine years after we identified both the challenge and the plan needed to eliminate this odious phenomenon, there should be practically no cases at all.

I do not wish to be misunderstood: if we had done everything we should have done over the past nine years to ensure the total elimination of this abominable practice by our own peacekeepers, and they still occurred, then we could accept that there was little more we can do. But we, as Member States, have not done everything, and so we cannot make that claim.

The United Nations is required to set an example before our publics as an Organization that will without question pay special attention to the most vulnerable and defenceless of protected persons in war, with first a guaranteed protection provided by ourselves, from ourselves, and then from others.

What must we therefore do? We must adopt the convention on criminal accountability as soon as possible. We must make the United Nations a co-examiner of the facts, even when the allegations involve United Nations military personnel. We must be more transparent with regard to the severity and nature of the crimes being committed by United Nations peacekeepers. We believe that the OIOS takes too long in establishing the facts, which then must be prepared by the criminal jurisdiction concerned in order for them to become admissible in courts of law. Perhaps, as it was originally suggested, another slim but effective investigative capacity needs to be considered.

We must do better on matters relating to paternity. In situ courts martial for military offenders must be the rule, and not the exception, for sexual offenses. And we must consider again the proposal that all United Nations personnel destined for field service submit a sample of their DNA to the United Nations before they deploy, both to serve as a deterrent to the commission of crimes and for the sake of possible subsequent investigations, including establishing paternity.

Finally, we, the Member States, need to report to the United Nations clearly and at the earliest possible time what judicial steps were undertaken by our authorities with respect to alleged crimes.

If we are serious about confronting the odious phenomenon of conflict-related sexual violence generally, and we are not to be hypocrites, we must think about these issues more seriously.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I, too, would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General, his Special Representative and Ms. Misaka for their statements and the information they have presented to us on issues of sexual violence in armed conflict.

For almost six years, the Security Council has constantly paid close attention to issues of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. Any armed conflict is characterized by a high level of violence in various forms. Sexual violence is one such phenomenon, an abhorrent act that calls for resolute condemnation and severe punishment. This crime is a consequence of the prevailing impunity and, as correctly pointed out in the report (S/2014/181) of Secretary-General, is closely related problems in ensuring security.

The work carried out to prevent and eradicate violence must be comprehensive and, above all, aimed at eradicating its sources by settling conflicts and restoring order and security. Combating just the manifestations of sexual violence is unlikely to bring about the desired results.

The prevention of sexual violence in armed conflict and punishing perpetrators should be considered in the context of the whole series of problems associated with conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. That is the balanced approach laid out in resolution 1325 (2000), and it is on that basis that the work to elimiate sexual violence should be based.

An important prerequisite for overcoming violence against women is the full participation of women themselves in peace talks and post-conflict reconstruction. The Council should consider the issue of women and peace and security in the context of armed conflict and post-conflict situations. The focus of the Council's attention should be on the most urgent and large-scale armed conflicts and situations of massive and systematic rape and violence. Individual cases of sexual violence, which are criminal acts and not war crimes, should not become the subject of consideration by the Security Council.

We must also avoid duplication of effort in this area by other United Nations entities with relevant competence — for example, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the Commission on the Status of Women and UN-Women.

We call on the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to act in accordance with her mandate when carrying out her activities and to give priority attention to situations on the agenda of the Security Council, where sexual violence is one of the main issues in the context of the protection of civilians.

Sexual violence in armed conflict is the topic we are considering today. We should avoid broader interpretations of what has been agreed at the intergovernmental level and enshrined in Security Council resolutions — a scope that pertains to armed

conflict and post-conflict situations. We believe that the expansive interpretation of the terminology being used, and this issue as a whole, can have a negative influence on the functioning of the Security Council and the United Nations in this area, as well as on the effectiveness of the fight against sexual violence.

Furthermore, we must not forget that in the course of armed conflict, women and children are not subject only to sexual violence; they continue to be victims of killing and maiming, including as a result of terrorist acts, and the indiscriminate or disproportionate use of force. Such crimes in particular often go unpunished or are justified by the inevitability of so-called collateral damage.

Combating sexual violence in situations of armed conflict is impossible without the active involvement of national authorities in the process. The report of the Secretary-General therefore places particular emphasis on the need for national ownership and the leading role and responsibility of States. Measures taken by the United Nations system and civil society should complement the efforts of States.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): I thank you, Madam President, for organizing this important open debate. I would also like to convey my sincere gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and to his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for their respective statements. Under their leadership, the silence has been broken surrounding the crime of sexual and gender-based violence, and they have rallied the Security Council to put in place a normative framework. But as Ms. Bangura has consistently stated, sexual violence continues to be pervaisive in crisis. We also wish to acknowledge the statement made by Ms. Rhoda Misaka, representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

A few years ago, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda established that rape and other forms of sexual violence were used as a weapon of war during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. Although no one can tell the true number of the victims of rape during the genocide, it is reported that between 100,000 and 250,000 women were raped. Some of those women survived with scars, some with incurable diseases, such as HIV/AIDS. The consequence of those heinous crimes is beyond description. Nevertheless, the perpetrators of those crimes in Rwanda, now acting under the umbrella of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, continued their mayhem in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where they terrorized communities and committed rape against women and girls.

Sexual violence is also a reality in Syria, the Central African Republic and many other conflict areas. In South Sudan, the radio is even used to call for the rape of women based on their ethnicity. We totally agree with Ms. Bangura that sexual violence in conflict needs to be treated as a war crime, not as an unfortunate collateral damage of war. It is therefore up to us as Member States to end this scourge.

It must be made clear that sexual violence is not only a United Nations issue but an issue that requires the leadership, national ownership and responsibility of States. National ownership is imperative because it is at the national level that Governments create a platform for awareness and outreach against those crimes. Governments, whether in conflict or at peace, have a primary responsibility to prevent any acts of sexual violence against women, children and men, and to ensure accountability for such crimes. That responsibility is transferred to non-State actors under whose control civilians are.

We call on the established United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict to continue supporting national institutions to strengthen their response in addressing sexual violence. Ending impunity for those who commit sexual violence during conflict should be our collective effort and goal. Along the same lines, the Council should ensure that all country reports and mandate renewals evaluate the level of protection and promotion of women's human rights, as set out in several Security Council resolutions.

In that regard, I totally agreed with what our colleague Prince Zeid that rapes perpetrated by United Nations civilian staff while on a peacekeeping mission cannot and should not go unpunished.

As the Council discusses options for the United Nations engagement in several conflict-stricken countries where the situation continues to worsen, with women bearing the brunt of the conflict and with human rights violations increasing, the United Nations presence should have a robust mandate to protect civilians. Protecting those in need should be given priority by ensuring that we take full measures, in particular to provide more effective protection to the civilian population at risk, to create the conditions for

humanitarian assistance and to allow the investigation of violations and abuses. All peacekeepers should be trained on gender issues and ways to support victims of rape before deploying to peace operations.

On our part, Rwanda has adopted predeployment courses for all our troops that include lessons related to sexual and gender-based violence. In the same vein, we call for the deployment of gender advisers, women protection advisers and child protection advisers in all United Nations peacekeeping missions to focus on violations and abuses committed against women and children, including all forms of sexual violence in armed conflicts.

Needless to say, the fight against impunity and accountability is key to eradicate the scourge of sexual violence in conflict. The Security Council should reinforce its efforts to ensure that investigations and prosecutions are carried out through the national justice systems when possible, or through various international justice mechanisms. Regardless of any debate we may have, our main objective is to ensure that justice is done for the victims, which can also serve as a deterrent for all belligerents.

In conclusion, allow me to restate our understanding that sexual violence in conflict, like any other growing violent trend, is a criminal practice that we can eradicate if we have the political will. We strongly believe that our joint efforts can yield tangible results and create a changed environment on the ground for those affected by that terrible scourge. My delegation will continue to support and work closely with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict in the implementation of its mandate.

Ms. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/181). Our respect, immense appreciation and sentiments go to Ms. Zainab Bangura. Our full solidarity goes to Ms. Rhoda Misaka. I wish to thank them for their briefings and for their commitment to making progress on full equality for women.

I am going to take a different angle in relation to referring to how much we have done. I am going to focus not only on what how much we still have to do, but also to add a hint of optimism.

First, the international governmental community has agreed that sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict constitute a war crime and a crime against humanity. It is worth mentioning it when we in the international community agree to say things in the same way and to work to the same end — in this instance towards the eradication of a problem.

Secondly, there is also reason for optimism owing to the international tribunals, such as those for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia and the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Today, the International Criminal Court and those tribunals have been building a clear definition of sexual violence as a war crime and as a crime against humanity. Certain countries in my region of Latin America and the Caribbean are also doing so. In my country, 1,083 persons have been prosecuted and 443 have been convicted for crimes against humanity, with a gender perspective and the aspect of women's human rights having been incorporated in all the cases.

Sexual crimes reported by victims in their testimony were not subject to punitive action until Rwanda, Yugoslavia and Sierra Leone, until the initiatives undertaken in our own countries, because they remained invisible. They were part of war, the spoils that came with vengeance and hate that targeted women's bodies. But while gender-based violence, and sexual violence aimed at women and girls in particular, is not a new phenomenon in history, the adoption of measures to investigate and prosecute it nationally and internationally is very recent. For that reason, we had to continue to work patiently but collaboratively. As my dear Jordanian colleague said, gender-based crimes used to be considered collateral damage in war; their investigation in many cases was peripheral and often resulted in impunity for the perpetrators.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights says that acts of sexual violence against women are crimes against humanity when they are used as weapons to inspire terror. It has defined sexual violence as any physical or mental abuse committed as an act of violence and also characterizes it as a crime of torture. Sexual crimes against women are now internationally codified. There is no statute of limitations, which we should recall here in the Security Council. Crimes against humanity have no statute of limitations.

The Belém do Pará Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence agaisnt Women says that it is not only an offence to human dignity but also a violation of human rights. Let me speak not just about what the justice system has

said, the words I have just read out. Justice in fact now says that because the victims had begun to be heard.

In one horrible case, a woman named Susana was raped in the hospital after just having been operated on. To this day I can hear her crying and saying that she had been a virgin. That was a crime against nature. For a woman, rape is an act of the worst possible humiliation.

Another woman, Monica, said:

"I asked them, when the Red Cross came to see us, I asked, 'As a woman, how is it possible that I did not become pregnant after being raped so many times?' They explained to me that women's periods tended to stop. They said that in concentration camps, like here, we did not become pregant, we were afraid to getting pregnant. We did not menstruate. We did not want to end up pregnant by a rapist."

Estela said:

"They did not allow us to bathe. It was very hard not to be able to wash after being raped and to have to remain soiled. They would give me stale bread. I was able to wash in a bathroom only a couple of times. I have images in my mind of being raped in the bathroom. By the final rapes I was fainting; I do not have a recollection of those. They would blindfold me. I heard a girl screaming, 'Mama, mama, mama'. We were in the same camp, and she was being raped."

A man named David said:

"They would give us electric shocks to our gums, under our lips, to our genitals. In my case, I had an abcess on my penis the size of a peach. They also placed things in my rectum that would conduct electricity. We were humiliated. I could not bear the agony. How could we go back — to say that a boy had been raped?"

I hope that all the victims will be heard, as those victims were heard and it was possible to do justice and combat impunity. We hope we will be able to work not just to eradicate this crime against humanity in conflict situations, but also to build equality for women in times of peace. Our friend Ms. Bangura has said it. "We will go out to find them", the children and grandchildren of the State terrorism that took place in Argentina call out in the streets. "As with the Nazis, we will find them, no matter where they are." They call out in the streets for the sake of the memory of their mothers and for the sake of truth, justice and reparation.

"We seek them without weapons, without hate or vengeance. We seek them for the sake of truth, memory, justice, reparation and peace."

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

I would first like to join others in thanking the Secretary-General for his insightful report (S/2014/181), which has provided this important debate with ample guidance. I would also like to express our appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zainab Hawa Bangura for her determined and enduring efforts to ensure global involvement in the fight against the abhorrent crimes of rape and sexual violence, especially in conflict.

Those present will all agree with me that Ms. Rhoda Misaka stirred our conscience this morning with her impassioned statement. She reveals the horror of sexual violence in conflict and invites us to fight this barbarism — more than barbarism — with unrelenting determination and commitment. We want to thank her and say that we support her in her work.

Nigeria takes note of the highlights of the Secretary-General's report, including the actions taken by States and the challenges confronting them in conflict and post-conflict situations in preventing sexual violence. We welcome the broad-based consultations that guided the report's preparation, which involved United Nations entities in the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, field missions and country teams, all concerned Member States and non-governmental organizations. We acknowledge the important work of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. We encourage Member States to draw on their expertise in strengthening the rule of law and the capacities of civilian and military justice systems.

That is all part of a broader effort to strengthen institutional safeguards against impunity for conflict-related sexual violence. Donors should be encouraged to ensure sustainable funding for this valuable resource for the countries concerned. Nigeria shares the Secretary-General's view that the lack of capacity remains one of the major impediments to ensuring accountability, which leads to widespread impunity. In turn, that has a detrimental impact on access to justice and the security and safety of survivors. It is evident that survivors' access to justice can be hindered by restrictions on physical access and inadequate legislation, or, indeed,

by the financial and social costs associated with reporting and pursuing justice for crimes of sexual violence. Regrettably, many countries lack legal aid services and protocols for the protection of victims and witnesses, and an already weakened criminal justice system amplifies the lack of access to justice. We are pleased to note that United Nations actors, including the Team of Experts, continue to support national authorities in that regard.

It is a matter of concern, as highlighted in the report, that the prevalence of sexual violence during a conflict often leaves not only an impact but especially bitter memories, with acute consequences for the security of women and children even when peace has been restored. That may ultimately have a direct bearing on the durability of peace and prospects for sustainable development.

With that in mind, the time has come for us to redouble our efforts in the fight against the scourge and to hold all perpetrators accountable. That is the consensus in the Chamber.

The Security Council demonstrated leadership in that regard in June 2013, by adopting resolution 2106 (2013), which underscores the need for more systematic monitoring of sexual violence in armed conflict. It is therefore imperative that the Council develop appropriate response mechanisms and consistently improve existing ones to ensure the participation of women in all aspects of mediation, post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding.

We acknowledge the critical role of women protection advisers within human rights and women's empowerment and gender units in peacekeeping operations.

At the global level there is now unprecedented commitment and momentum on the application of all the relevant Security Council resolutions. The international community must sustain that momentum. As part of those accomplishments, we believe that a great deal more needs to be done to implement commitments on women and peace and security. For example, there is a need for increased sex-disaggregated data on security threats in order to contribute to greater security for women.

My country welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendations that outline critical elements for the prevention of sexual violence in conflict, specific actions required at political and operational levels and the need for national ownership, leadership and responsibility.

The determination to tackle sexual violence in conflict is not confined to the United Nations. At the regional level, under the auspices of the African Union, the African Solidarity Initiative held a high-level meeting in October 2013 on preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict countries and beyond. That consultation was organized under key international policy and action frameworks, particularly resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), the 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1), the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, the protocol on the prevention and suppression of sexual violence against women and children and the 2009 African Union gender policy. The meeting was aimed at significantly reducing and eliminating sexual violence and accelerating the implementation of agreed responses, especially those related to prevention and protection and victims' access to care and justice.

At the subregional level in West Africa, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has also put in place strong mechanisms with regard to the role of women in conflict prevention and management. Those include the protocol on conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping and security and the supplementary protocol on democracy and good governance. Those mechanisms form the basis of the ECOWAS conflict-prevention framework.

The women and peace and security component of the framework is aimed at consolidating women's role, participation and impact at all stages of conflict management, including humanitarian provisions, while reinforcing various national and regional mechanisms on their protection and promotion.

Other regional initiatives of that nature include the women's network for peace and security in the ECOWAS region; the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding; the Movement against Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa; and the Alliance of African Initiatives for peace and stability in West Africa.

At national level, through the Law Reform Commission and the Federal Ministry of Justice, Nigeria has initiated reforms in the criminal justice system to ensure the delivery of gender justice in law and practice. Bills on addressing gender equality and all forms of violence against women and girls have been sponsored at both the federal and state level. Strident

steps have been taken at the national level to ensure the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). In the same vein, Nigeria stresses the importance of compliance with resolution 1820 (2008), on ending acts of sexual violence against women in conflict.

Nigeria fully embraces the adoption of political commitments to prevent sexual violence in conflict, namely, the historic declarations adopted by the Group of Eight countries in April 2013 and the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, which has been signed by more than 140 nations. We believe that Member States should implement those commitments as a matter of high priority. Member States that have yet to sign that important Declaration should be encouraged to do so before the October deadline — about six months from now.

It is critical for States to focus collectively on converting the political commitments into concrete preventive action, particularly at national level. It is in that spirit that Nigeria today, in this forum, declares its intention to sign on to that laudable initiative as a means of demonstrating its unwavering commitment to the fight against sexual violence and all its ramifications.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I wish to request all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I wish to inform all concerned that we will be carrying on this open debate right through the lunch hour, as we have a very large number of speakers.

I now give the floor to the Her Excellency Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa, Minister of National Defence of Ecuador.

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to highlight the importance of the issue before us — sexual violence — which particularly affects women in conflict situations and is an issue that gravely affects human rights. In that respect, this debate should directly involve the General Assembly. It is also necessary to stress the importance of combating the root causes of war and conflict, namely, the influence of the arms trade and violent actions by the powerful.

The current world conflict scenario has become even more complicated due to economic dynamics. Countries in crisis view the arms trade and war as ways to strengthen their economy. But truly nothing will undermine human rights and women's rights more than strengthening the economy through the arms industry. The total world military expenditure in 2013 was $1.747 billion. The 15 countries with the highest military expenditure together represent four-fifths of all military spending in the world.

Moreover, it is a paradox of our time that, although the growing technological sophistication has not resolved the basic problems of a large part of the world population in achieving sustainable development, it has provided weapons of mass destruction. And there is still no end to poverty and inequality.

Ecuador is convinced that, to deal with the fundamental causes of conflict and violence, genuine commitment is needed to curb the current arms race and new forms of war and conflict, such as so-called preventive war, cyber espionage and the involvement of outside actors in fomenting conflict within countries in support or defence of their own interests.

It must be acknowledged that armed conflict and violence are often generated by inequality among States that themselves have been generally affected by an unjust international economic system, various forms of social exclusion, religious intolerance and ethnic and gender discrimination. In that regard, we must call upon States to avoid wars of aggression and the use of force based on alleged threats out of respect for the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples. With those considerations, we do not see that the problems of sexual violence in conflict have diminished, due to the persistence of a social permissiveness with respect to violence against women and girls, which, unfortunately, in many areas of society, has come to seem almost natural.

Sexual violence is a violation of fundamental human rights and, in particular, the human rights of women. International humanitarian law and international criminal law are dedicated to protecting women from sexual violence. However, we do not see the indices of violence against women diminishing this year. As we have said before, it is the responsibility of all States to put an end not only to that form of violence, but also to impunity for war crimes, including war crimes related to sexual violence, for example, such horrors as forced

prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization and other types of sexual violence.

In the case of Ecuador, our armed forces are considered to be an institution that protect the rights, freedoms and guarantees of all our citizens — men and women. We therefore look at defence as a public good that integrates human rights, international humanitarian law, gender equity and multiculturalism in a cross-cutting manner. This takes concrete form in the implementation of our gender policy in the Ecuadorian Armed Forces, which has been in force since March 2013. The gender policy fosters a change in the cultural patterns that cause gender-based violence, through which related subjects are incorporated into training for all military personnel and the promotion of educational programmes designed to prevent sexual violence that are tailored specifically for the training of troops. The policy has also brought improvements to military infrastructure so that adequate conditions are in place for military personnel, female and male alike.

We must also say that in some regions of the world we continue to undertake peaceful means of conflict resolution, building a culture of peace and new forms of coexistence, as well as a clear position for achieving global disarmament. As members of the Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, we are contributing to the creation of a true region of peace. But those efforts undertaken at the national or regional levels can be strengthened only by the effective actions of international bodies such as the International Criminal Court, which brings the timely prosecution of crimes against humanity, especially those related to discrimination and violence against women.

Lastly, Ecuador again insists upon the need to come up with multilateral and global strategies that fight the underlying causes of war and conflict and bring to light warmongering policies, adopting measures that bring an end to them and subjecting them to international law. We remain committed to building a true culture of peace through social justice, the fight against impunity, dignity and equality of women and the good living of our peoples.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the President for organizing today's open debate, which gives us the opportunity to address the Security Council on conflict-related sexual violence — a subject on which my country has been very active due to its deep conviction that we should keep fighting against all forms of violence against women and girls.

I would also thank both Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura for their briefings, and Ms. Rhoda Misaka, representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, for the statement she made on behalf of civil society.

Sexual violence is a repugnant and criminal phenomenon that is closely linked to insecurity and the impunity associated with a weak institutional framework for the rule of law. Those issues have been very present in earlier debates of the Council, as well as those, in other contexts, in the General Assembly, including the work in progress on the post-2015 development agenda. States have adopted measures to confront the scourge and to protect women and children, who are the most vulnerable to sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. However, in each new report, the Secretary-General takes stock of horrendous situations caused by offenders, particularly those that appear as systematic violators in the annex of the report (S/2014/181).

In addition, the United Nations has taken concrete measures, including, inter alia, the creation of the position now occupied by Ms. Bangura, the application of provisions for monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements, and the deployment of women protection advisers to numerous peacekeeping operations. Despite those achievements, however, the phenomenon persists, as we have sadly observed in such recent cases as Syria, Mali, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For that reason, the Council should not stop insisting that States in conflict or post-conflict situations give priority to reforming the rule of law and strengthening the capacity of national institutions, including civilian and military justice systems, because those weaknesses are the primary obstacles to ensuring accountability. That leads to a widespread impunity, which in turn has negative effects on access to justice and the safety of survivors.

In our own internal conflict, which ended more than 17 years ago, there remain victims and consequences of the atrocities committed, and that has helped us to produce legislation on violence against women and girls so that they can live in a stable and democratic society. Preventing violence against women is a priority

for the Government of Guatemala, and in recent years legislation has been adopted and institutions and policies created to complete that mission.

Finally, one of the legacies of our own presidency of the Security Council in October 2012 was the presidential statement S/PRST/2012/23, which addressed the need to eliminate obstacles to women's access to justice in conflict and post-conflict situations. We are pleased to have made a contribution to the work of the Council in the matter.

The President: I call on the representative of Japan.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): First of all, I would like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, for their briefings. I would also like to thank Ms. Rhoda Misaka for her powerful briefing as a representative of civil society.

Japan welcomes the latest report of the Secretary-General on this agenda item (S/2014/181). Newly introduced national-level policy recommendations will help the Security Council to continuously monitor country-specific situations. Japan also appreciates that the report highlights the role of United Nations Action as a coordination mechanism, and its activities on enhancing prevention.

Security Council resolution 2106 (2013) provided, for the first time, the theme of sexual violence in conflict with a comprehensive prevention framework. We believe that the emphasis on prevention is vital if we are ever to defeat conflict-related sexual violence.

Progress on the ground is dependent upon concrete action by both national Governments and civil society in affected countries. The international community must support them to achieve change on the ground.

The Japanese Government fully supports the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's new priorities of strengthening national ownership, leadership and responsibility. In appreciation of the work of the Special Representative, the Japanese Government invited Ms. Bangura to Japan last November. During her visit, Prime Minister Abe reassured her of Japan's commitment to cooperating closely with her Office. We are deepening our collaboration with her Office, as well as its Team of Experts and United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict. Japan is now the second largest contributor to the Special Representative's Office, after Sweden.

One example of Japan's assistance is a contribution of $2 million dollars to support the work of the Team of Experts in Somalia and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In those countries, the Special Representative and her Team of Experts, through their engagement efforts, have succeeded in forging political commitments with national Governments. Joint communiqués were later signed between the Special Representative and the respective Governments. Japan's financial contribution will help those Governments to implement the communiqués.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, we are helping the Government expand and consolidate the special police for the protection of women and children. We will also support the activities of the special representative of President Kabila on sexual violence once that post is filled.

Furthermore, on International Women's Day, the Japanese Mission and the Office of the Special Representative co-hosted a special event here in New York in order to raise awareness of the topic we are discussing today. We look forward to further cooperation with the Special Representative in that regard, including at the upcoming Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, to be held in London in June.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Patriota (Brazil): I wish to thank you, Madam President, for convening this debate on the important matter before us. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his remarks and for his report (S/2014/181). I am also grateful to Special Representative Zainab Bangura for her presentation, and I wish to commend her and her Office for the crucial role that they have been playing in international efforts to combat sexual violence in conflict.

May I also to refer to the very moving presentation by Ms. Rhoda Misak, from the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. May the Council and the United Nations membership more broadly heed the six areas of serious concern related to the situation in South Sudan and sexual violence in all conflicts, including in those situations that are not the focus of the international community.

Let me also express my satisfaction in welcoming the Minister of National Defence of our sister nation Ecuador, Her Excellency Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa,

to participate in this debate. I think that all of us in South America feel very well represented by her statement.

The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war is abhorrent and utterly unacceptable. These crimes destroy the social fabric of communities and inflict long-lasting psychological trauma.

We welcome the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, issued at the beginning of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, which Brazil supported.

The latest report of the Secretary-General serves as a stark reminder that sexual violence is still being used as a tool of intimidation and social control in conflict and post-conflict situations. It rightly states that the prevalence of sexual violence during conflict often leaves lasting effects with acute consequences for the security of women and children in peacetime. Ultimately, that has a direct bearing on the durability of peace and prospects for sustainable development.

Brazil has repeatedly condemned all forms of violence against all women and girls, including sexual violence in conflict. We continue to advocate that one of the most important ways to combat conflict-related sexual violence lies in policies aimed at the prevention and peaceful resolution of armed conflicts. Preventative measures could prove instrumental to spare the human and psychological costs associated with sexual violence. They involve, among other things, strengthening national capacities, changing how victims are perceived in their communities and protecting witnesses. They also encompass curbing the availability of weapons used to commit those atrocities, ensuring, through adequate predeployment training, that peacekeeping missions are increasingly instrumental in preventing conflict-related sexual violence, and promoting criminal accountability and due prosecution of sexual violence crimes.

The international community has adopted an extensive legal framework dealing with violence against women. The 1993 General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (General Assembly resolution 48/104), the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, inter alia, include requirements for the prohibition of all forms of gender-based violence to be incorporated into national legislation. Peace agreements and post-conflict measures should build on those and other frameworks under international law.

However, in practice, peace agreements rarely make reference to the need to eradicate all forms of violence against all women and girls. They seldom include provisions linked to accountability for gender-based violence. Post-conflict arrangements hardly ever deal with the situation of women who have been subjected to violence during conflict and its aftermath. Sexual violence, including domestic violence, is still not sufficiently viewed as a threat to peacebuilding and related to broader issues of insecurity.

Conflict-related sexual violence needs to be explicitly addressed in security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. More has to be done to ensure that women are active participants in peace agreements and in the negotiation, design and implementation of post-conflict and peacebuilding arrangements.

Brazil is aiding victims of sexual violence in various countries, including Haiti, Guinea-Bissau and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A Brazilian donation of $1 million to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, specifically intended to help victims of sexual violence seek reparations and justice, has so far benefited 510 victims of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the same spirit, the Brazilian Cooperation Agency has implemented projects with the United Nations Population Fund in Haiti and Guinea-Bissau, focusing on capacity-building to deal with victims of gender-based violence in areas such as health, justice and security.

On the domestic front, Brazil has incorporated, in its National Policy Plan on Women for the 2013-2015 biennium, the relevant recommendations contained in resolution 1325 (2000), including those aimed at fighting sexual violence as a weapon of war. In March 2013, the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations hosted a seminar, organized by the Igarapé Institute think-tank, on the theme "Women, Peace and Security in Brazil: overcoming challenges and bridging gaps". The event proved to be a fruitful opportunity to assess ways in which Brazil could advance the discussion at the national level and contribute towards multilateral efforts on women and peace and security.

I would like to highlight once more the importance of the empowerment of women for the prevention of

sexual and all other forms of violence against women and, in a broader context, for the prospects of sustainable peace. As already recognized by the Peacebuilding Commission, the transformative potential of greater participation by women in the economic and political spheres can make an invaluable contribution to building more peaceful, democratic and prosperous societies. During a recent trip to Guinea-Bissau, in my capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, I was impressed by the contribution that women's organizations have made to forging a more inclusive political culture in the country.

Finally, I wish to pay tribute to those who have been working closely with the victims of sexual violence to lessen their suffering. The name of Dr. Denis Mukwege of the Democratic Republic of the Congo comes to mind as an example of courage, selflessness and solidarity. His authoritative call for action during his statement to the General Assembly in 2012 continues to resonate to this day.

The international community should use this periodic debate as an opportunity to renew its commitment to the creation of a world where women, men and children do not have to endure the suffering of being a victim or a victim's relative of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Madam, on your country's accession to the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also welcome Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and am gratified by the participation in this meeting of the Minister of National Defence of Ecuador, Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa.

My country has spared no effort in providing the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General with data, forensic reports and formal letters documenting the responsibility of the various armed terrorist groups in my country for the sexual assault, rape, abduction and killing of women and girls in Syria. These crimes are part and parecel of the Salafist, Wahabi and takfiri ideology they seek to spread throughout the region. We have demonstrated our commitment to supporting international efforts to end all forms of sexual violence, holding their perpetrators and instigators accountable, and ending the silence and unjustified indifference in the relevant reports of many specialized agencies of the United Nations concerning all such ethically and socially abnormal behaviour against Syrian women.

While we appreciate Ms. Bangura's efforts in the preparation of the report before us (S/2014/181), her interpretation of events in Syria remains unfortunately partial and unilaterally sourced. In order to explain why this is so, I have prepared the following remarks on the section of the report pertaining to the situation in Syria.

First, those who drafted the report continue to allege that the information contained therein was not verified "largely owing to a lack of access" (*S/2014/181, para. 55*). In the regard, I assert that the Syrian authorities have received no request from any United Nations office in Damascus or elsewhere, including that of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, to visit any location in order to verify information provided by the Syrian Government. I recall that we have extended a formal invitation to the Special Representative to visit Syria on more than one occasion since her appointment, and before the drafting of her two reports, in order to help her assess events on the ground rather than relying on misleading allegations arising from the media. We have done so because of our interest in objectivity and balance and in order to prevent politicization. However, for reasons unknown to us the Special Representative seems not to have found time to undertake such an important visit. Clearly, her failure to do so has prevented her Office from reporting accurately on sexual violence in Syria.

Secondly, in the report the Special Representative indicates that her allegations are based on

> "[i]nformation gathered from displaced civilians outside the Syrian Arab Republic and reported by the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic" (*ibid.*),

as well as by former detainees. I insist that the work undertaken by the commission since its establishment has been neither professional nor objective. Instead, it has been political in nature and supremely biased against the Government of Syria. In that regard, I confirm that the Government of Syria rejects all accusations against the Syrian national army, including the allegation that women have been subject to sexual violence at checkpoints that are in busy, open locations — a fact

that in itself negates any possible truth or validity of such accusations.

Thirdly, despite the attempts of the Special Representative and her team to document crimes of sexual violence committed by the armed terrorist groups in Syria, she remains unable to verify them, preferring to keep references to them vague and indirect. Fully aware that the Syrian Government has provided her with documentation of crimes of sexual violence committed by members of these groups against women — including murder, kidnapping, gang rape, slavery, torture and marriage jihad — the Special Representative and her team have unfortunately not bothered to verify any such allegation or to seek additional information from the Syrian Government or other entities.

In this connection, if the Special Representative has been unable to verify what she calls "media reports" concerning the crime of marriage jihad, we are prompted to ask whether the statement made by the Minister of the Interior of Tunisia before the Tunisian Parliament on 19 September 2013, which falls within the reporting period covered by the report, to the effect that 300 Tunisian women had fallen victim to this sick fatwa from the Gulf, is also to be considered a media report that cannot be verified. The United Nations, as represented by the Special Representative, plays a key role in eliminating this unprecedented humiliation of women. This phenomenon affects not only Syrian women, but women and girls worldwide. One such incident, although surely not the last, involved four minor girls — two from Austria and two from France — who fell prey to this heinous fatwa, as reported by the French and Austrian official media.

Fourthly, it is critical for us to focus on the suffering of displaced women in camps in neighbouring countries. We are deeply concerned over the deteriorating security situation in the camps in neighbouring countries that host Syrian women and girls, who suffer insecurity, human trafficking, rape and false marriages. All this is documented in reports of the United Nations and the Western media, which highlight the tragedy of displaced Syrian minors below the age of 14 who have found themselves shipped to major slave markets in the Arab world, where petrodollar sheikhs and human-trafficking mafiosi enslave them in the name of religion. Moreover, two documented reports confirm 18,000 cases of trafficking in the organs of Syrian girls and children in Turkish hospitals. We have communicated this information to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts.

Here we would ask: If it is claimed that the failure to document the crimes of sexual violence committed by the terrorist armed groups is due to the inability to access locations within Syria, how can it be explained that none of these violations in the camps — which their host countries have always declared open to whoever wishes to visit — is being documented? And why did the Special Representative not mention the host countries' violations of their commitments to those displaced Syrians?

Syria reaffirms that it is serious about dealing with such grave and heinous violations. Furthermore, we assert that we continue to desire to cooperate with the United Nations, and in particular with Ms. Zainab Bangura, to highlight the reality in Syria without incitement or politicization. The Syrian authorities are ready to look into any name or incident that has been referred to the Special Representative so that it may be investigated within the framework of ongoing cooperation and dialogue with her Office.

In conclusion, the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence at King's College London has uncovered that 10 women travelled from Britain to Syria to fight side by side with the armed terrorist groups in Syria.

Belgium has called on the nine European States concerned with the issue of foreign combatants in Syria to meet in Brussels on 8 May, alongside representatives of the United States of America, Turkey, Morocco, Jordan and Tunisia. The Minister of Interior of Belgium has said that addressing the issue of the return of foreign combatants to their countries of origin is one of her most important concerns. This issue, which we have warned against that repeatedly over the past three years, has now become a concern of Europe.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Ms. Burgstaller (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and, my own country, Sweden.

First, let me thank the Secretary-General and the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, and Ms. Misaka of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for their

informative statements, and express the continued and strong support of the Nordic countries for their work against sexual violence in conflict.

The appalling situation faced by survivors of sexual violence calls for our urgent attention. Sexual violence in conflict must stop. A strong normative framework is in place, the Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security being the most prominent constituent, and we call on the full implementation of those resolutions. As the Secretary-General points out in his report (S/2014/181), we have reached a stage where implementation is what counts. The responsibility lies with all of us and Member States must commit themselves to implementation. The burning question is: how do we do it?

It is important to address both the causes and consequences of sexual violence. We need to work on deterring new crimes and we need to hold perpetrators accountable. While the primary responsibility for that lies with the States, the role of the International Criminal Court is also of crucial importance. The Nordic countries commend the work done by the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in strengthening the capacities of States to address such violence. The Justice Rapid Response/UN-Women roster of sexual and gender-based violence justice experts has proven to be another important and effective tool to address crimes related to sexual and gender-based violence in conflict.

Promoting gender equality and women's participation is critical if we are to ever tackle the causes of sexual violence. We must always remember that women are not only victims; they are also a great resource for their communities and countries. A fundamental part of combatting sexual violence is that women will be actively involved in political decision-making and in the economic life in their societies, and that their voices are heard and respected. Women's input is key to finding the right solutions and putting an end to these crimes. The role and influence of civil society in preventing and addressing sexual violence are essential and must be supported.

Therefore, investments in gender equality and women's full enjoyment of human rights — not least in fragile States — must be seen as core to preventing sexual violence in conflict. We know that women's participation is essential for building sustainable peace. We need to ensure that women's rights must never be a marginalized side activity that takes place only after all the hard security issues have been dealt with. It is crucial to ensure that the women, peace and security agenda is duly reflected in all engagements relating to international peace and security. We expect the Security Council to ensure that gender perspectives are consistently mainstreamed in country resolutions and in authorizations and renewals of mandates, as laid out in resolutions 1960 (2010) and 2106 (2013). We would like to highlight in particular the requirement that missions establish monitoring and reporting arrangements on sexual violence.

The Nordic countries would also like to emphasize the importance of women's participation in the design of security sector reform (SSR) and in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes. We welcome the Secretary-General's focus on that in his report. Flawed SSR and DDR processes can lead to impunity and insecurity with widespread sexual violence, even after the end of a conflict.

The number of internally displaced persons and refugees continues to rise to unprecedented levels. In his report, the Secretary-General points to sexual violence as a driver of displacement and highlights the increased risks faced by displaced women and girls, who make up the majority of displaced persons. To further assist in that regard, the United Nations should advance the deployment of women protection advisers and gender advisers in both peacekeeping and political missions, as well as in humanitarian operations. Across sectors and actors, the United Nations needs to remain vigilant about the need to address sexual violence in conflict by ensuring the highest standards and training of its personnel.

Another issue that is reflected in the Secretary-General's report and which deserves more attention is sexual violence perpetrated against men and boys. The lack of national legislation, specialized services and the stigma associated with those violations are among the factors that prevent recognition of that violence as a crime.

Effective measures to end impunity should be combined with multisectoral services for survivors of sexual violence, including their access to legal services and health services. The Nordic countries support the Secretary-General's call for survivors' access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services and welcome his acknowledgement of the United Nations particular responsibility in that regard.

I thank you, Madam President, for this opportunity to share some of our views on preventing sexual violence in conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mrs. Morgan (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico thanks Nigeria for holding this open debate and the Secretary-General and Ms. Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for their statements.

One of the major challenges facing the international community in this area is that of bringing perpetrators to justice to put an end to the culture of impunity. In addition to that, there is the serious problem that an overwhelming majority of survivors never have access to means of reparation and reintegration. Accountability mechanisms, both nationally and internationally, are therefore essential to address that problem. Mexico emphasizes the relevance and usefulness of the International Criminal Court and its complementary power to investigate and prosecute those responsible for international crimes, including war crimes and sexual crimes, if a State is unable or unwilling to do so.

At the same time, we should not forget that sexual violence in conflict is almost never reported as a result of the risks facing both survivors and witnesses, which complicates the creation of accurate records on the incidence of that crime. We need closer cooperation among States and greater coordination among United Nations bodies to set up a joint international strategy to combat the culture of impunity, enable the full inclusion of women as key actors in peace processes and ceasefires, and promote their participation in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration measures and in security sector reform.

Mexico acknowledges that the commission of certain crimes is so serious that it transcends national interests and affects the international community as a whole; therefore, all States have an obligation to investigate and punish such crimes with the two-fold objective of ending impunity and preventing recurrence. Our country actively participates in the actions and efforts of the international community to prevent international crimes. One example is our membership in the Latin American Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention, which held a training seminar this week in Mexico City on international mechanisms for the prevention of mass atrocities, with the participation of Government experts, international organizations and members of civil society and academia.

Likewise, at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, Mexico endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and agreed to serve as a regional promoter of the initiative launched by the United Kingdom in 2013. As part of those efforts, Mexico will host a regional seminar next month that will bring together a multidisciplinary group of experts and officials from the United Nations system to gather input from experts from Latin America and the Caribbean and to foster the exchange of best practices in combating sexual violence in conflicts.

Mexico has also supported the development of an international protocol on the documentation and investigation of sexual violence in conflict, as a result of the Declaration of Commitment, and it has appointed an independent expert to assist in that process. We hope that the protocol will become a new tool that facilitates research aimed at prosecuting those responsible and providing comprehensive care to victims.

Moreover, my country is also reviewing its legal and institutional framework with a view to possibly creating an action plan to implement resolution 1325 (2000). That process involves the relevant areas of Government and systematizes some activities already carried out nationally, such as capacity-building for our armed forces in the human rights of women and in gender equality.

While the international community now has a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for addressing sexual violence under consideration by the Security Council, we must do much to continue to strengthen and implement it.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada..

Mr. Rishchynski (Canada) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to convey our congratulations to you, Madam President, and to Nigeria for presiding over the Security Council this month and to thank you as well for the invitation to participate in this important debate.

(*spoke in English*)

This open debate is an important opportunity to review the shocking but all too constant tragedy of sexual violence against women and girls in conflict situations. The debate today serves as a necessary

bridge between the considerable political commitment, concrete programming in the field and high-level activities. In 2013, at the United Nations and elsewhere, the international community worked to raise awareness and establish a framework for the prevention of violence against women, including conflict-related sexual violence. Canada is encouraged by the momentum demonstrated by upcoming high-level activities focused on practical measures to improve the lives of women and girls, and to empower them to participate and contribute fully to the development of their communities and countries unhindered by the effects of sexual violence, female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage.

(*spoke in French*)

In the past year, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution (A/HRC/RES/23/25) on accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women with a focus on sexual violence, including in conflict. The Human Rights Council also passed the first-ever stand-alone resolution (A/HRC/24/23) that addresses the harmful practice of child, early and forced marriage. Canada is honoured to have played a role in those resolutions and is pleased by the support for them by many other delegations.

In New York in June 2013, the Security Council passed resolution 2122 (2013), which further addresses sexual violence in conflict and emphasizes the essential role of women's participation in preventing sexual violence. In September 2013 at the General Assembly, some 140 Member States endorsed the United Nations Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, which was co-sponsored by the United Kingdom, Canada and many other champions of preventing sexual violence.

(*spoke in English*)

The impact that conflict and long periods of post-conflict recovery have on the safety and security of women and girls and the barriers that the various forms of sexual violence represent for their capacity to learn and to develop their full human potential is an issue that we all must address.

Canada continues to call for support for women's civil society organizations, particularly those assisting survivors of violence to ensure their health, safety and dignity, and those amplifying women's participation in decision-making processes.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada welcomes the Security Council's resolve to include explicit requests for protection and support for women and children affected by conflict in mission mandates. The missions can play a key role in helping to monitor, investigate and report on violations committed against women and girls, including all forms of sexual violence in conflict, and to contribute to efforts to identify and prosecute perpetrators.

(*spoke in English*)

I can assure the Council that Canada remains committed to women's political and economic empowerment as essential elements in efforts to address and prevent conflict-related sexual violence. In that regard, we plan to continue to work closely with Ms. Zainab Bangura, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the Council in a forthright, integral and results-focused manner to try to put that detestable practice behind us.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Mayr-Harting: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, as well as Ms. Rhoda Misaka, who spoke on behalf of civil society, for their statements.

Conflict-related violence continues to claim lives and lead to serious and irreparable consequences for its survivors, their communities and their families, including children born of rape. That is clearly reflected in the alarming information in the latest report submitted by the Secretary-General (S/2014/181). We therefore call on the Security Council and all stakeholders to continue to focus on measures aimed at preventing sexual violence, protecting and assisting its survivors, bringing its perpetrators to justice and ensuring that

women and women's organizations participate in all our efforts to foster peace and security.

We welcome the steps taken towards a consolidated approach to conflict-related sexual violence and, more broadly, to the issue of women and peace and security, as well as the progress made in moving from the principles and goals established to creating operational measures and tools. We must live up to our political commitment through concrete and measurable action. In that regard, we strongly agree on the need for all of us to assume national ownership, leadership and responsibility.

We commend the work of the Special Representative and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, and welcome the Secretary-General's report. The European Union agrees that more work on a comprehensive, multisectoral and multidimensional approach to preventing conflict-related sexual violence should be done. In that regard, we would like to particularly emphasize the following issues.

Reporting, monitoring and information-sharing should be based on intensifying the establishment and use of monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements in the context of country-specific resolutions and mandates. It also depends on increasing the deployment of women protection advisers in the relevant peacekeeping missions. We also note the importance of continued and enhanced information-sharing, including through briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and by the Executive Director of UN-Women, when the Council is discussing mandate renewals and country situations.

Concerning access to justice and accountability, crimes of sexual violence must be prosecuted and punished under national and international law. In that regard, we emphasize the significant advances made in international law by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the non-permanent international criminal tribunals relating to combating sexual violence in conflict, as well as national efforts to implement the Statute. We also support targeted and graduated measures by the relevant Security Council Sanctions Committees aimed at perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict. In that regard, we note the resolution renewing the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (resolution 2134 (2014)), which includes sexual violence as part of the designation criteria for targeted sanctions.

In South Sudan, we are very concerned about the recent reports from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan of targeted killings of civilians based on their ethnic origins and hate messages calling for sexual violence against people on the basis of the community they belong to. We are also concerned about women's participation in conflict prevention, resolution, protection and peacebuilding processes. None of our actions will be effective unless they are backed by the expertise, support and ownership of women and women's organizations, as well as that of civil society and community leaders.

The European Union continues to implement its dedicated policy on women, peace and security, including through close cooperation with other international and regional organizations. In that regard, we welcome the designation of Ms. Bineta Diop as the African Union Commission Chairperson's Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. Among the EU's support for efforts to address sexual violence is a project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that focuses on empowering women, combating impunity and reforming the security sector. The EU is continuing its work on specific training modules on human rights and gender in crisis management, helping to focus on sexual violence in armed conflicts and on training for trainers on gender and human-rights issues.

We welcome the provisions related to gender-based violence and violence against women and children in the Arms Trade Treaty, which has been signed by all European Union member States and already ratified by a majority of them. We also welcome the endorsement by 144 States of the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, proclaimed last September in New York, to be followed up in June at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. We must stay focused on combating sexual violence. I can assure the Council that the European Union will do its part to contribute to that goal.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations.

Mr. António: I would first like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his statement, and Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura for hers and for her very important role,

and Ms. Rhoda Misak for the very insightful statement she made.

I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Bineta Diop. Due to unforeseen commitments, Ms. Diop could not come in person, and I therefore wish to convey her apologies and best wishes for the success of this debate. Ms. Diop wishes to thank the Federal Republic of Nigeria in its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of April and for her invitation to this important debate. Ms. Diop is currently in South Sudan as a member of the African Union commission of inquiry on that country. She and her colleagues are there to investigate human-rights violations and other abuses committed in the context of South Sudan's current crisis, and to make recommendations on fighting impunity and ensuring accountability, national reconciliation and healing. She has therefore asked me to make the following statement.

"I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/181) and leadership, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for her commitment to preventing conflict-related sexual violence and protecting women, men and children around the world from that scourge. I also thank the Executive Director of UN-Women for her full support for the women, peace and security agenda in Africa.

"The Chairperson of the African Union Commission has made the protection of women's right across the continent a priority, and she is committed to promoting and working to achieve gender equality. She is also making sure that the Commission has a 50/50 workforce parity, in line with the gender policy adopted by the African Union (AU) in 2009.

"In January I assumed my mandate as Special Envoy of the African Union Commission Chairperson on Women, Peace and Security. With that appointment, I recommitted to continuing to work closely with the women of the African continent. I resolved to amplify their voices and concerns within the African Union and other decision-making bodies, and to ensure that women assume their rightful role in ensuring peace and security in Africa.

"The number of victims of sexual violence during armed conflict in Africa is staggering, and tackling the issue of conflict-related sexual violence is one of the critical areas of concern in my new mandate, requiring urgent and effective action at the community, national, regional and international levels. Additional areas of my mandate relate to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and women's participation in peace processes.

"I am therefore pleased to report that in January of this year the AU Commission signed a cooperation framework, with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, on preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. That agreement complements ongoing efforts by the African Union Peace and Security Department, which is working to put in place a code of conduct and zero-tolerance policy that clearly outlines the AU's strong position against sexual violence, exploitation and abuse by AU troops.

"The code of conduct and the zero-tolerance policy will be shared with all troop-contributing countries and integrated into all related training. We are already seeing progress in that area with the African Union Mission in Somalia, which already has a policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, the agreement strengthens the collaboration and common commitment of the African Union and the United Nations to combat impunity, promote accountability, implement capacity-building and training programmes, foster improved coordination and national leadership and ownership, facilitate the provision of multisectoral services to survivors and alleviate their stigma and trauma.

"Article 11 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa — the Maputo Protocol — calls on State parties to

'protect asylum-seeking women, refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons against all forms of violence, rape and other forms of sexual exploitation, and to ensure that such acts are considered war crimes, genocide and/or crimes against humanity and that their

perpetrators are brought to justice before a competent criminal jurisdiction'.

"Implementation of the Protocol and all existing AU instruments that address the issue of conflict-related sexual violence must be accelerated. There is still a long way to go and a lot of work to be done. We must start by doing away with the tradition of inequality between women and men, which is one of the overarching reasons why violence against women is widespread and so easily carried out. Our young boys and men must be educated and engaged in the fight against the culture of sexual violence.

"In discharging my mandate, I am committed to looking beyond the view of women as only victims and men as only victimizers. Instead, I will recognize them as active agents in the fight to prevent conflict-related sexual violence. Conflict-prevention and early warning mechanisms must fully involve both women and men and must be approached through community efforts with monitoring and financial support made available to ensure their successful implementation.

"We must undertake progressive, aggressive prevention measures and challenge societal norms that portray girls as less valuable than boys, causing them to develop low self-esteem and self-worth, thus further contributing to the cycle. We also need to prosecute perpetrators and hold them accountable for their actions in conflict-related sexual violence.

"In recognition of the critical need to investigate sexual-violence atrocities committed in conflict situations, one of the objectives of the AU Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan is to document atrocities of sexual violence with a view to ensuring the accountability of those responsible and fighting impunity.

"We must ensure that the cries of the people of South Sudan do not go unheard. We cannot say that we do not know; and once we know, we have no excuse — we have to act. The responsibility lies with all of us.

"Moreover, we need to raise the profile of women's networks and civil society organizations, which in many instances serve as first responders to address the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence and are the first to stand in solidarity with survivors. Sustained progress and action on those issues requires the strengthening of local initiatives and mechanisms to combat conflict-related sexual violence, including those targeted at protecting judicial independence, promoting gender-sensitive school curricula, training civilian police, sensitizing youth and combating stigma and ethnic discrimination.

"The African Union has had a gender-parity principle in force since 2002. The Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, adopted in 2004, applies to all AU member States, and we hope to see its full implementation reflected in the approach to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

"If it is agreed that women's rights are human rights and that women are essential to the establishment of peaceful societies, we need, in our approach to tackling conflict-related sexual violence, to enable the full participation of women during peace processes. The African Union and the United Nations should continue to build a critical mass of women mediators and appoint more women as lead mediators.

"As the Special Envoy, I am working very closely with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, regional bodies, national and international partners and Africans from all walks of life to ensure that women contribute meaningfully in peace negotiations. Conflict-related sexual violence is a global scourge and the approach to combating it should, accordingly, be both local and global. We count on the joint effort of the United Nations and the AU. I count on the support of the Security Council in implementing the women, peace and security agenda across the continent.

"As we approach 2015, the Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda commits us to the eradication of all forms of violence against women and children. The African Union's Agenda 2063, which represents a commitment to build a prosperous and peaceful Africa, puts particular emphasis on the engagement of women and youth in the continent's development.

"In conclusion, I humbly appeal to all here present to continue your support of our efforts in

the fight against sexual violence, and I leave you with the words of former President Nelson Mandela.

> "'As long as we take the view that these are problems for women alone to solve, we cannot expect to reverse the high incidence of rape and child abuse. Domestic violence will not be eradicated. We will not defeat this scourge that affects each and every one of us, until we succeed in mobilizing the whole of our society to fight it.'"

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): Allow me to begin by thanking you, Madame President, for organizing today's open debate of the Security Council. I also wish to thank Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, for her work, as well as the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/181) and the speakers for their important contributions to the discussion.

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union and wishes to make the following remarks in its national capacity.

Two months ago, Italy released a revision of its national action plan on the women and peace and security agenda with a view to accelerating the implementation of the plan over the next three years. The revised plan not only reports on our progress but also shows the efforts made to adopt a more effective approach. The paradigm of our new national action plan towards the realization of that agenda is based on three concepts — coordination, integration and mainstreaming.

First, with respect to coordination and integration, our reference point at the national level is the Interministerial Committee on Human Rights, which coordinates within the various administrations all activities relating to women and peace and security issues. To facilitate communication and share information, we are also setting up a specific online roster of experts who will be made available to relevant civil society organizations and Government ministries. Lastly, our revised national action plan introduces a self-evaluation exercise, by which we are committed to a periodic self-monitoring of all initiatives. An assessment report will be issued by the end of the year.

Secondly, with regard to mainstreaming, for some years now, we have been mainstreaming gender-related issues into all socioeconomic initiatives, and at the international level we have definitively overcome the limitations of separate targeted gender-emancipation programmes. We are convinced that by using that cross-cutting approach we will be more effective in preventing all forms of violence.

We have promoted gender mainstreaming across the armed forces, in training programmes carried out by Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units in Vicenza, and in our police force, and by establishing a specific gender-perspective unit at the Ministry of Defence. I would also like to state that close to eight per cent of Italian peacekeepers are women, which is above the average ratio in peacekeeping operations.

Italy has been a strong advocate of initiatives on women and peace and security since the beginning, having been, inter alia, in 2010, the first country to call for the women and peace and security agenda to be introduced into the framework of the universal periodical review mechanism. In 2015, the Security Council will hold a high-level meeting to review the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). It will be a moment — the moment — where we will have to provide responses to the recommendations made and shape the way forward. For the sake of brevity, in that respect, I will make only two suggestions about weaknesses in implementing the agenda, where we think still more engagement is needed.

First, with respect to the lack of information, as the observer of the European Union has stated, we need to enhance data sharing, which can provide critical support for the advancement of the agenda by providing a clearer picture of the reality on the ground and subsequently by exerting political pressure where needed. Secondly, with respect to the lack of accountability and the persistent impunity of perpetrators, reversing the social dynamics so that we can move from the stigmatization of the victims to the criminalization of the perpetrators is an attainable goal. In that fight, the International Criminal Court has a unique role to play in complementing the efforts of national courts when they are unable or unwilling to bring perpetrators to justice. That is an aspect that we tend to overlook and which does not always clearly emerge in United Nations reporting.

In the firm belief that all of the elements of resolution 1325 (2000) must be systematically addressed in the

work of the Security Council, Italy stands ready to act. We cannot afford to let those issues fall off the United Nations agenda. Women and peace and security must continue to remain a political priority for the Security Council.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Thoms (Germany): At the outset, I would like to thank the delegation of Nigeria for having organized today's open debate. My thanks also go to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Ms. Bangura, for their very insightful briefings. I also thank Ms. Rhoda Misaka for the statement she made on behalf of civil society.

Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

We welcome the Secretary-General's comprehensive report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2014/181), and we commend the United Nations staff in the various agencies and in the field that have contributed to the report in such detail.

Progress has been made in the fight against sexual violence in conflict since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions. However, sexual violence has not been eliminated. It is time to take stock of what has been achieved. Implementation and the consolidation of measures to prevent and end conflict-related sexual violence have to be our main objectives. Let me make a few suggestions on how to further advance the women and peace and security agenda:

First, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of the effective and meaningful participation of women, in the interest of promoting gender equality, which is the essence of resolution 1325 (2000), and of ending sexual violence. Women themselves know best what they and their children need in order to feel safe, to protect themselves and their families, and to rebuild their lives and their communities after a crisis. They need a seat at the table at all levels of conflict prevention, peace negotiation, transitional justice and reconstruction. It is not enough to just let them be observers of decision-making processes. That is especially important not only at the local level but also in the national and international context. The United Nations needs to ensure that women are involved in all United Nations-led peace and reconciliation talks.

In efforts to achieve the active involvement of women, civil society organizations can play an important role. They can connect women's organizations and train women representatives and thereby empower women to take their rightful place in all decision-making processes.

Secondly, it is well known that sexual violence is a prevalent element in most armed conflicts and is sometimes even used as a tactic of warfare. Recent events in South Sudan, where radio broadcasts were used to incite sexual violence, are a stark reminder of that appalling reality. Most perpetrators still go unpunished and are not held accountable for their actions. Those actions destroy the lives of women, children and whole communities. Accountability is the promising way to promote lasting reconciliation. If hatred and fear prevail in a society, peace will not be possible.

Accountability is first and foremost the responsibility of each State. Therefore, national capacities need to be supported and built. Justice- and security-sector reforms are essential. When effective prosecution in the State concerned is not possible, the only way to achieve justice for victims and survivors is to have those cases transferred to an international jurisdiction, including to the International Criminal Court.

Thirdly, the prevention of sexual violence, especially by preventing conflict in the first place, has to be the goal of all our efforts. In order to prevent sexual violence in ongoing conflicts, the elimination of gender-based imbalances in a society is crucial. To that end, coordination between all relevant sectors is essential. That includes security, service provision, justice, human rights, development and peacebuilding. We thank United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict for its work in ensuring such coordination in order to achieve more efficient results and a better use of resources, and we encourage all United Nations agencies to continue their commitment to that critical inter-agency initiative.

Fourthly, data collection is essential for our ability to prevent, protect and respond and is the precondition for any justice and accountability mechanism at the national and international levels. Women protection advisers therefore need to be deployed and monitoring and reporting arrangements should be established in all relevant peacekeeping and special political missions. We welcome the mandating of women

protection advisers in the newly established Mission in the Central African Republic, which will face the challenges of integrating women protection issues into all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform processes, and of ensuring that the survivors of sexual violence have access to all psychosocial and medical services in order to protect their sexual and reproductive rights.

Germany has recently ratified the Arms Trade Treaty, which has clear provisions related to serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children. We would like to call on all States to follow our example and sign and ratify the Treaty in a timely manner.

Germany will continue its support to UN-Women and all other relevant actors, including civil society organizations, to ensure that women's active participation and their important contribution to conflict resolution and peacebuilding are adequately taken into account.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): I wish to congratulate Nigeria on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. Malaysia welcomes its initiative in convening an open debate on this important issue. Malaysia also wishes to align itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Viet Nam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Violence against women is one of the most widespread violations of human rights and most broadly discussed topics. It is utterly deplorable that one in three women and girls experiences violence in her lifetime. Violence against women, especially sexual violence, has massive repercussions. The incidence of sexual violence in conflict, in particular, often has grave consequences for the security of women and girls during peacetime. Malaysia joins other Member States in strongly condemning sexual violence against women and girls, men and boys. My delegation remains concerned that sexual violence is almost universally under-reported. We must reverse this trend. We need to urgently address the factors and underlying reasons for the continued acts of sexual violence committed against women and girls and the emerging incidence of sexual violence perpetrated against men and boys.

Ending impunity is crucial to our quest to put an end to sexual violence in conflict. We must move urgently to replace the prevailing culture of impunity with one that promotes the rule of law, justice and accountability. We welcome the ongoing work of the United Nations and other stakeholders, including the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, which focuses its efforts on strengthening the capacity of national rule of law and justice actors. We agree with the Secretary-General's recommendation and call on countries to draw upon the expertise of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, as we believe that its engagement with relevant Governments would strengthen the latter's institutional safeguards against impunity for conflict-related sexual violence.

Underlining the importance of ending sexual violence, Malaysia joined many others in endorsing the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, which makes clear the collective view on the need for greater action to address the issue. Malaysia also welcomes the recent adoption of the Agreed Conclusion of the 58th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, strongly condemning all forms of violence against women and girls. It is crucial that we now focus our collective efforts on converting those political commitments into concrete actions.

My delegation supports the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse in all peacekeeping operations. We believe that it is fundamental to ensuring that the rights and dignity of women are safeguarded. Malaysia, in this regard, welcomes the delivery of scenario-based training for peacekeepers in several training centres to improve their operational readiness to react swiftly to sexual violence. We commend the work of United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict in rolling out a framework of early-warning indicators to help enhance prevention capabilities in mission settings.

My delegation believes that this issue requires continued vigilance on the part of the Security Council. We are therefore pleased to note the progress made in the implementation of the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements as mandated by resolution 1960 (2010) to promote increased and timely action to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

We have made strides in addressing sexual violence in conflict, but we can and must do more to put an end to this scourge. Malaysia therefore reaffirms its strong commitment to efforts to address sexual violence in

conflict and post-conflict situations. We will continue to work with others to advance the agenda and ensure the participation of women is mainstreamed in activities towards securing peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

Mr. Kolga (Estonia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Latvia and Estonia. Our countries would like to join others in thanking you, Sir, for organizing this open debate on the important issue before us. We fully align ourselves with the statement delivered no behalf of the European Union.

We thank the Secretary-General, Ms. Bangura and Ms. Misaka for their statements. We also thank the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report on which today's discussion is based (S/2014/181).

Both of our countries agree with the Secretary-General that important advances have recently been made on the issue before us. It is crucial that we now focus on converting these political commitments into concrete action — that is, prevention and services on the ground. Indeed, the Security Council, through its five resolutions, has developed a robust framework to prevent and address sexual violence in armed conflict. However, gender crimes remain an enduring part of most armed conflicts and rape continues to be used as a weapon of war.

We are concerned by the alarming facts reflected in the report that, despite the extensive legal framework we have been able to agree on, violations continue, or are even on the rise. Among other things, we have been informed about an increase in reported incidents of sexual violence in Afghanistan, and there are clear indications that conflict-related sexual violence has been a main feature of attacks in the Central African Republic and a consistent characteristic of the crisis in South Sudan.

Estonia and Latvia believe that accountability for sexual violence crimes is crucial for deterring and ultimately preventing their commission, and for doing justice by victims. To date, sexual and gender-based violence as a war crime or crime against humanity has been prosecuted primarily at the international level. As the only permanent international criminal tribunal, the International Criminal Court (ICC) therefore has an important role to play where States lack the capacity or political will to hold perpetrators to account. The Council itself has also acknowledged on numerous occasions that the fight against impunity for sexual violence crimes has been strengthened through the work of the ICC.

However, the ICC will never be able to ensure accountability on its own. To reverse the near complete impunity that perpetrators of sexual violence currently enjoy, it is important that States build the capacity to ensure accountability. States lacking the necessary national legislation to investigate and prosecute perpetrators should therefore incorporate the ICC's provisions into their own legal systems. We would emphasize here that the ICC Statute has some important innovative provisions. For instance, the scope of crimes of sexual violence in international law has been expanded, acknowledging that sexual violence can be committed against both men and women. It also provides safeguards to ensure that victims of sexual violence can testify without being put on trial themselves and with minimal re-traumatization.

By serving as a model for the international community, the ICC's accomplishments can therefore be seen as part of a broad-based effort to adequately address sexual violence at both the international and domestic levels. Given its pivotal role, the Court should enjoy the support and cooperation of all States, the Council and international and regional organizations. In order to enhance accountability, the Council could adopt targeted measures against those responsible for conflict-related sexual violence and include individuals sought by the ICC on the sanctions lists.

The Secretary-General's report describes the increased incidents of forced marriage, campaigns of forced pregnancy and the fact that lives are being put at risk through unsafe abortions. We call on everyone to respect what we have agreed concerning the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls. In addition, I would especially like to stress the importance of quality sexual and reproductive health services for survivors.

It is of utmost importance that peacekeepers continue to be trained to enhance their capacity to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence, that women protection advisers be deployed within peacekeeping and special political missions, and that ceasefire or peace agreements explicitly reflect sexual violence considerations

Latvia and Estonia commend United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and the efforts of the United Nations system to establish the monitoring and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence, as mandated by resolution 1960 (2010). We would also like to commend the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict for assisting Governments in building national capacity and expertise in addressing impunity for those crimes. Estonia supported the Team of Experts financially in 2013 and plans to do so again this year.

In conclusion, let me stress once more an evident fact that, regrettably, does not yet seem to be very evident to everyone in the world — the use of sexual violence as a method of war must stop. It is an inhuman practice that, as Ms. Bangura has rightly pointed out, should belong to the history books and not to everyday reality.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mrs. Furman (Israel): In a few months, we will mark 14 years since the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000) and four years since it adopted resolution 1960 (2010). While those resolutions are the subject of frequent discussions and debates within these halls, sexual violence continues to be used as a tool of subjugation and war. It is a crime of humanity against humanity and a plague that must be eradicated. If a nation refuses to prosecute domestic sexual abuse, marital rape and honour killings in times of peace, then there is little hope for justice in times of war and conflict.

I look around the world today and see an epidemic of sexual violence. The number of victims is so large and overwhelming that we often lose sight of the fact that we are speaking about individuals: the husband who spoke out against an oppressive regime and is forced to watch as his wife is raped by Government forces; the brother who is sexually violated in a detention centre to force a confession; the daughter who is subjected to gang rape and then forced to deliver a child because abortion services are illegal in her country; the sister in a refugee camp who is forced by her family to marry her rapist so as to protect the family's honour.

Our family of nations is failing millions of families throughout the world. The problem is particularly widespread in the Middle East and Africa. In Yemen, child abduction and sexual abuse are on the rise. In Mali, young girls are being kidnapped and gang-raped. In Somalia, women are being forced into marriage and sexual slavery. In Syria, Government forces and pro-Government militias have used sexual violence, including rape, in detention centres and prisons across the country.

By failing to prevent sexual violence, we are failing an entire generation. In conflict situations, parents keep their girls out of school to keep them safe. Without an education, those girls are unlikely to find work and more likely to become young mothers. And so the cycle of poverty is passed from one generation to another.

Israel is proud to be among the 140 States that have signed the Declaration on Sexual Violence in Conflict initiated by Special Representative Zainab Bangura and the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdon, William Hague. While the number 140 may sound impressive, we must note that 48 Member States have refused to join the call to end sexual violence in conflict. There is no place for sexual violence in a civilized world. We must stand together to prevent those barbaric crimes, and we must stand united with the victims of sexual violence so they will know that they are not alone.

The alarming report that we are discussing today (S/2014/181) finds that sexual violence is almost universally underreported. The reasons are well known — victims are denied legal recourse or face stigmatization and reprisals. Few countries have programmes like those in Sierra Leone, where women can safely report an attack to a family support unit. The Secretary-General's report offers clear guidance on the important steps that the international community must take. Israel strongly supports the recommendations in that report.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the work of Special Representative Bangura and United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict. The work they are doing, including training peacekeepers and providing technical support at the country level, is laying the foundation for improving the situation on the ground. Israel also values the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, which is partnering with governments to strengthen national legal systems.

The international community has a collective responsibility to the victims of sexual violence in conflict. All of us — Governments, civil society and United Nations agencies — must work together to pass

stronger laws, strengthen enforcement mechanisms and introduce tougher penalties for offenders. We must act as a family of nations but, more importantly, we must be a family of compassion. Every victim of sexual violence has a name, a family and the right to live in peace and dignity. Every one of them deserves our support.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mr. Moura (Portugal): I would like to thank Nigeria for convening this open debate on women and peace and security, with a particular focus on sexual violence in conflict, an issue to which Portugal attaches great importance. I also wish to warmly congratulate Ms. Zainab Bengura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, on the excellent work she has been carrying out.

Portugal aligns itself with the statement made this morning by the observer of the European Union, but I should like to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

While acknowledging that important progress has been made in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security, we need to recognize that significant challenges remain. Women are still underrepresented at the several levels of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, just as they are inadequately represented in formal peace negotiations. The exclusion of women from peace talks and peacebuilding efforts often means that insufficient attention is paid to addressing women's needs and concerns in the post-conflict phase, thereby reinforcing a circle of inequality and marginalization. Moreover, the abuse of the rights of women and girls is a dominant feature of conflict, and sexual violence is often widespread and systematic both in conflict and in periods of political instability.

Sexual violence and rape are prevalent in regions of war as well as in refugee camps. Violence against women, including rape and sexual slavery, is often used as a weapon of warfare in order to dehumanize women themselves or the communities to which they belong. Importantly, high levels of sexual and gender-based violence also rarely cease at the end of hostilities and continue well into the post-conflict phase. The costs of sexual and gender-based violence are largely underestimated and ignored. Such violence is surrounded by a culture of silence and impunity, and the range and complexity of the underlying causes make it a difficult issue to address, particularly in conflict-affected contexts where judicial and security institutions are weak.

Durable peace and reconciliation are heavily compromised if the perpetrators of such acts are not prosecuted. Impunity for perpetrators and insufficient response to the needs of survivors are unacceptable. The grave violations of women's human rights through mass rape and other sexual violence require the immediate attention of such organizations as the International Criminal Court and other relevant tribunals. Furthermore, international and national courts should have adequate resources, access to gender expertise, gender training for all staff, and gender-sensitive programmes in order to more effectively prosecute those responsible for such crimes.

Further prompt action on the part of all actors is necessary to change the reality on the ground for women and girls at risk of becoming victims of violence or already affected. We need to redouble our efforts, notably in the fight against impunity. Often, in the name of peace amnesty is given to combatants who had used sexual violence as a tactic of war. We believe that there can be no sustainable peace without justice for victims; targeted and graduated measures should be imposed against all parties to a conflict that are responsible for grave violations of women's rights. Perpetrators, including commanders who commission or condone the use of sexual violence, should be held accountable.

On these matters, zero tolerance has to be the rule. We also need to strengthen support networks to ensure that survivors of violence can return to take an active part in public life, especially in peacebuilding efforts. And we need to work with UN-Women and the United Nations country team partners to help countries to develop national action plans to coordinate the implementation of all women and peace and security resolutions.

Women have indeed a crucial role to play in rebuilding war-torn societies and in preserving social cohesion. They did it in Europe during and after two world wars; they did it in South America; and they have done it in Africa in countries divided by civilian strife. They still do it on a daily basis in several countries tormented by conflict. What is essential is to guarantee that women are included in peace processes and to ensure that their perspectives, direct knowledge

of the concrete situation and concerns are taken into account as important contributions to the reshaping of torn societies in post-conflict situations and in peacebuilding efforts.

To conclude, Portugal has been striving to support the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and their political participation. In this context, my country reaffirms its commitment to ensuring women's effective participation in peace and security and to translate this commitment into enhanced action.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): First I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of the Moroccan delegation for convening this debate on sexual violence in conflict, which is important for the international community. This is the first time I am speaking here in my capacity as the new Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco, and I am delighted to do so under your presidency and on a topic chosen by Nigeria, to which my country attaches great importance.

I should also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ms. Rhoda Misaka of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for their briefings.

We welcome the convening of this debate, which enables us to take stock of the progress made and difficulties encountered by Member States in protecting women and childrenfrom sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. The Secretary-General's report (S/2014/181) is an exhaustive list of events that took place during the reporting period and of national experiences that have much to teach us and which reflect a desire to assume national ownership in ending sexual violence on the part of the countries concerned.

Women often need protection and support; they are the hardest hit by devastating impact of violence and, regrettably, pay a high price for their increased vulnerability and difficult living conditions. Protecting women against sexual violence in conflict remains a collective responsibility and requires us to act with resolve, coordination and as one to strengthen measures to stop the perpetrators and instigators of the violence and to prevent such violence from recurring.

The Secretary-General's report rightly underscores that the slowness of progress made in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of sexual violence, promote a high-risk environment for women and girls. Resolution 2106 (2013) seeks to strengthen the existing legal arsenal protecting women against multiple types of violence. The resolution has allowed us to define a comprehensive prevention strategy through concrete, targeted and situation-specific actions. The Secretary-General's report also underscores that rape is often the most widespread use of violence in refugee and internally displaced people camps. Unfortunately, these camps offer no security to women, particularly single women or heads of families, because of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the infilftration of armed elements among the refugee population, and even the militarization of camps.

The reform of the security sector, accountability and strengthening the access of victims to justice, as well as awareness-raising of human rights and training within national security institutions, would provide better protection for victims. My delegation would like to welcome the work done by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in assisting countries to strengthen their national capacities, to promote transitional justice and to reform the security sector.

The signing of peace and ceasefire agreements and implementing programmes to prevent gender-based violence, and the drafting of codes of conduct for security forces have helped to launch investigations to establish the criminal responsibility of the perpetrators. My delegation welcomes the efforts made by United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict in training peacekeeping personnel so as to strengthen their operational capability for rapid reaction and response to prevent violence.

My delegation also wants follow-up, analysis and information-sharing arrangements established pursuant to resolution 1960 (2010) to be improved in order to take better account of realities on the ground through the collection of objective, viable and credible data. We also want the orientation note on contact points between these arrangements and the information-management system on gender-based violence established by United Nations Action to enable us to improve the ways in which we gather and share information. Awareness-raising campaigns to protect women in conflict

depends on the involvement of public authorities and national human rights institutions, civil society and local women's organizations, as well as religious heads, who play a key role.

My delegation belives that the mandates of women protection advisers in peacekeeping operations and special political missions need to be clearly defined and periodically evaluated in order to enable each context to be borne in mind and to improve coordination between among the advisers in carrying out their missions so as to avoid any possible duplication of work on the ground and to ensure better consistency in their work.

While parties to conflict bear the primary responsibility for violence against women and girls, United Nations action must reflect the benefits not only of dialogue and cooperation, but also of deterrence through resort to legal means, prosecution and incarceration for the perpetrators of these heinous crimes. Accountability must be the principle on which the United Nations should base its work. Combating impunity must be an ongoing parameter for the work of the international community in combating sexual violence, strengthening access to justice systems in place, promoting and strengthening the rule of law, and restoring security, peace, stability and sustainable development in the countries affected.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this debate, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, for her important contributions.

Spain fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. The full version of my statement will be circulated in the Chamber, but I should like to share what I believe to be its most vital elements.

Conflict-related sexual violence is a violation of human rights and possibly one of the most abhorrent. My country therefore firmly supports the idea of an optional protocol that would help to mitigate and document violations of human rights. We believe that if we are to effectively combat conflict-related sexual violence, we need the cooperation of regional and subregional organizations. Therefore, we particularly welcome the appointment by the African Union of Ms. Bineta Diop to help in addressing conflict-related sexual violence. Spain has also cooperated with the African Union in such difficult areas as providing gender advisers in Guinea Bissau, Mali and Somalia.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2014/181) is magnificent and lengthy. We have read it extremely carefully. I should like to emphasize six elements that I believe to be of vital importance.

First is the importance of prevention, as we all know. Secondly, in post-conflict situations, which are perhaps the most serious and most traumatic of situations, we need to incorporate a specific provision for care for victims. Thirdly, we must never forget the victims themselves, whose situation is truly tragic and alarming. Fourthly, we must keep in mind in particular victims from vulnerable sectors, such as indigenous groups or the disabled. Fifthly, it is important to ensure appropriate training for armed forces because they can play a definitive role in conflict and post-conflict situations. Lastly, we need to combat helplessness.

I have two positive concluding remarks to make. First, we have made progress and have certainly done so because of the work of Ms. Bangura's Office. Secondly, we must duly exploit the current momentum. I should also like to comment on remarks made by Ms. Bangura and by the Ambassador of Malaysia.

Ms. Bangura said this morning that we need to move from resolution to solution. I think we have a sufficiently broad normative corpus of resolutions and decisions that enable us, legally speaking, to address this very tragic phenomenon. The Ambassador of Malaysia said something that I wholeheartedly endorse, to the effect that we must have zero tolerance for sexual violence in conflict, which, I repeat, is one of the most heinous and tragic violations of human rights.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Sajdik (Austria): It is my great honour to address the Council today on behalf of the Human Security Network. Our cross-regional network consists of Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Panama, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand, South Africa as an observer, and my own country, Austria. Women's full enjoyment of all human rights remains at the core of our group's agenda.

Let me first thank the Secretary-General, his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict,

Ms. Bangura, and Ms. Rhoda Misaka for their comprehensive statements.

The Human Security Network welcomes recent progress on the women and peace and security agenda, including the most recent resolutions 2106 (2013) and 2122 (2013). The Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict issued in September 2013 was also an important landmark, and we look forward to these commitments being converted into concrete actions, including through the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, which is to take place in June.

We are appreciative of the efforts of Special Representative Bangura and the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/181). Conflict-related sexual violence is pervasive, although, as the report clearly states, it is almost universally underreported due to factors such as stigma, reprisals and the targeting of survivors and those who support them, including humanitarian workers, human rights defenders and journalists. We welcome the progress and commitments made by States and the work of United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

However, our group is concerned about elements in the report indicating the systematic and widespread use of sexual violence as a tool of intimidation and social control. In addition, the report highlights the continued use of sexual violence as a means of displacing populations, as well as the pregnancies resulting from sexual violence and the plight of children born of rape, which requires much more attention. We call on all parties to cease such sexual violence-related violations and to hold perpetrators to account.

Ceasefire and peace agreements should contain provisions that stipulate conflict-related sexual violence as a prohibited act in the definition of a ceasefire, and amnesty provisions must not be applicable to crimes of sexual violence. Furthermore, parties to conflict have to provide remedy and assistance to victims and survivors of sexual violence, including health-care services. We also call upon the members of the Security Council to use all means at their disposal to address sexual violence in armed conflicts, including by making referrals to the International Criminal Court and other relevant actions.

We welcome the recommendations in the report, including those on steps that can be taken by the Security Council to reinforce and implement the prevention framework outlined in resolution 2106 (2013). Let me also highlight that women's empowerment and participation are essential to any prevention and protection response.

Regarding our own behaviour as an organization, we encourage the Secretary-General and all other relevant actors to ensure the full implementation of the zero-tolerance policy against any kind of sexual exploitation or abuse. According to the report contained in document A/68/756, concerning allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in the United Nations system, despite a slight increase in 2013 there has been a general downward trend in the number of allegations of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse received in recent years. Nonetheless, one substantiated case is one case too many and is unacceptable.

Strengthening civil society, including grass-roots women's organizations and networks that provide assistance to victims and survivors of sexual violence in conflict, can enable the restoration of dignity and respect and provide the necessary skills, treatment and care to empower individuals to protect themselves and defend their rights.

To conclude, I should like to reiterate our group's commitment to promoting and enhancing the role of women in peace processes. The importance of women's participation in decision-making in conflict resolution processes cannot be overstated. We also remain strong supporters of women protection advisers within the United Nations peacekeeping and political missions, and believe that their positions should be financed from within mission budgets. We must all strive towards enabling stronger protection for women and girls in conflict situations while simultaneously addressing the drivers of sexual violence before it occurs, and the Human Security Network will continue to contribute to this shared goal.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Colombia has just lived through five decades of armed conflict that particularly affected the most vulnerable groups among our people, children and women, who are nearly always in the most isolated and rural areas. We face many huge challenges. Obviously, a country that has experienced such prolonged conflict has also suffered from the aberrant conduct of illegal armed

groups, which particularly affect our women and girls. Therefore, as a representative of my Government, but first and foremost as a woman and Colombian citizen, I should like to emphasize the fact that we are guided by our firm conviction that we should not tolerate the existence of one single victim. Colombia aspires to an end of conflict and the acheivement of lasting peace.

That is why, in reading the report (S/2014/181) we are discussing in this open debate, convened by the Nigerian presidency, I should have liked to have seen recognition of the progress made by Colombia in its public policy, domestic legislation and the implementation of both. We should also like to have seen the report reflect the crucial political juncture that, as we move towards peace after 50 years of conflict, initiated by President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, and which we hope will lead to a peace agreement with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. This is a position of principle with respect not only to sexual violence against women in conflict, but also to all victims in general.

First, Colombia adopted a victims and land restitution law in 2011, which included such huge advances as in a programme to heal and fully reintegrate victims and survivors of sexual violence in particular, highlighting the problem and earmarking the necessary resources for compensation, 57 per cent of which go to women.

Secondly, in 2013, the year covered by the report, the Colombian Government through its National Council on Economic and Social Policy, which guides all Government policies nationally and locally where conflict generally breaks out, promulgated an inter-institutional strategy to combat impunity and provide comprehensive care to victims of gender-based violence in the framework of armed conflict, in particular victims of sexual violence. The strategy seeks to identify the barriers that often hinder access to justice and care for women victims of sexual violence.

Thirdly, in an historic achievement, the Defence Ministry issued a protocol for the armed forces on the prevention of and response to sexual violence, in particular in conflict, which was drafted with civil society and the United Nations office in Colombia. Capacity-building was implemented for 350,000 soldiers and police officers in order to ensure its due implementation.

Fourthly, our Ministry for Foreign Affairs, led by Ms. María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar, began in 2011 to promote initiatives to prevent the participation of boys and girls in armed conflict — which, as Ms. Bangura knows, often occurs — through a comprehensive programme that provides opportunities and safe havens for boys, girls and adolescents in districts where there is likely to be a high level of recruitment of minors. We call these safe havens "leisure houses" where children can come into contact with art, sports and new technologies during after-school hours, which are often prolonged in our villages and countryside. These havens are very well designed, with the help of our communities. This year, they will be established in 25 municipalities.

Fifthly, I should like to emphasize the active role of two women, plenipotentiaries of the Government of Colombia in the peace process. They represent a necessary complementary perspective in the decision-making process to put an end to conflict in my country. All of this demonstrates the Colombian Government's political resolve to deal with the phenomenon here.

I should not like to conclude without referring to the recommendations in the report, and in particular that on the 2012 the legal framework for peace and its implementation. To paraphrase Ms. Bangura, we need to move from legislation to implementation. We need to strengthen the institutional and legal framework so that all citizens can enjoy the necessary means to be sure of access to truth, justice and reparation for all conflict-related sexual violence. This is our daily priority. As the report suggests, Ms. Bangura can certainly rely on our commitment to continuing to comply with the various Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1960 (2010), and to coordinate with the United Nations agencies, always provided that they are in full agreement in the national authorities.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

Mr. Koncke (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to congratulate the Nigerian presidency on having convened this debate, and to thank all those, particularly women, who work day in and day out to promote peace and security. Our thanks also go to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, for her contributions.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) , the women and peace and security agenda has clearly progressed both in reach and depth and now occupies a recognized place among the panoply of legal and political instruments and specific actions carried out by the Organization to champion the importance of adopting a gender perspective in which the needs of women and girls are included in all conflict situations, and particularly in post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Lamentably, despite the progress made in recent years, as a troop-contributing country we can say that in the areas of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, civilians, in particular women and girls, continue to be those most severely affected by conflict and in post-conflict situations. Likewise, the reports on women and children show that they remain the most vulnerable sector in such situations and the main physical and emotional victims of sexual violence. Next year will mark the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which will offer us the opportunity to assess good practices, the progress achieved, and the shortcomings and challenges remaining, and to consider identifying new goals.

The situation of children born as a result of violence is of great concern to us. They suffer social stigma with grave economic and serious psychological consequences. This is also true of forced marriages of women and girls carried out by armed groups in the situation of women victims of trafficking, sexual slavery and forced displacement. We emphasize the need for greater attention to be paid to restoration of the rights and rehabilitation of victims of serious violations, in particular in cases of abuse and sexual exploitation.

It is important to stress that in post-conflict situations the number of women head of families is on the rise. It is therefore critical to guarantee the economic and social rights of women in such contexts. Moreover, promoting accountability is another vital element, and to that end the United Nations system must continue to combat impunity for the perpetrators of such violations, promote national capacity-building, and work with regional actors to promote international justice mechanisms and support the work of women's human rights organizations.

Uruguay considers the women and peace and security agenda to be part and parcel of a broader agenda closely linked to those on children in armed conflict and the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We therefore believe that it is vital to move forward in as coordinated a way as possible to achieve synergy, avoid duplication of efforts, and most effectively to avail ourselves of the United Nations instruments in the field. One of these — peacekeeping operations — is certainly very significant, in which civilian protection mandates have been incorporated in recent years, with particular attention to women and children.

Significant progress has been made. However, regular attacks on civilian populations, particularly in zones of deployment of missions, highlight the ongoing limitations to meeting the expectations of locals populations and the international community. Many of these limitations can be corrected by clear and predictable strategies that are attuned to each mission; better coordination among the various actors in the field, particularly in relations with the host State, which bears the primary responsibility for protection; and greater resources, which are absolutely necessary, among other measures. Particular attention must also be paid to the need for full adherence to the code of conduct on the part of all those in United Nations contingents deployed in the field, on the basis of zero tolerance. We are therefore concerned by the persistance of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping missions.

The natural feedback between protection and participation is probably the core concept emerging from resolution 1325 (2000), in which the Council reaffirmed the important role played by women in preventing and resolving conflicts and in peacebuilding. In that regard, we are concerned over the low representation of women at various levels. Uruguay has been in the vanguard of incorporating women into the armed forces, as evidenced in the number of women deployed by the armed forces and the national police in the Uruguayan contingents of peacekeeping missions. In our capacity as volunteers, we have developed and documented very significant statistics revealing our commitment to the goals of these missions. We therefore reiterate the importance of continuing to promote the greater participation of women in the various areas linked to the peace processes, providing an undeniable qualitative contribution.

In conclusion, we remain committed to the development and implementation of the protection of civilians in armed conflict agenda, with particular attention to women and children. We do so by means of our work here at Headquarters and through our Blue Helmets in the field. We also reiterate the importance of

establishing the broadest possible basis for this agenda. The participation of so many countries in today's debate bears witness to that commitment.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Nepal.

Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal): First of all, I wish to thank the Nigerian presidency for organizing this important debate of the Security Council today. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, and Ms. Rhoda Misaka of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for their comprehensive briefings this morning.

For far too long, the role of gender in conflict has remained the least studied, least understood and least utilized in the realm of peace and security. I note the progress made both in protecting women and girls and in giving women the protection roles in United Nations missions since the adoption of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000). Yet, women and girls continue to be the targets of choice of sexual and other violence in conflict. It is only through concerted work that we can succeed in eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls during or after conflict.

Nepal believes that the United Nations system should play the central role in dealing with sexual violence in conflict. For this purpose, it should continue to empower women by encouraging equality and by implementing the human rights instruments already in place. Women must be sent to the field as peacekeepers and peacemakers in greater numbers. There must be more women in the United Nations system, also at the policy level. They must be the agents of positive change. Only in developing a competitive edge by acquiring the requisite skills will women be able to take advantage of their opportunities and play their entrusted roles effectively. At the end of the day, it is the quality that sustains the gains of women to create a safer global community.

Nepal has excellent experience with its national plan of action to implement resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) — the first in South Asia. Encouraged by positive results, the Government is now localizing them at subnational levels. Our top priorities are increasing the participation of women in decision-making processes, protecting women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence with a zero-tolerance policy and ending impunity. Crucially, Nepal has also introduced policy measures to provide relief to the victims of conflict.

Since the peace process started eight years ago, Nepal has steadily moved forward in empowering women, including those affected by conflict. The interim Constitution requires that women constitute 33 per cent of candidates at all levels of election, including the Constituent Assembly. Moreover, this proportion must also hold in each district-level peace committee, thus enabling women to address local level post-conflict issues across the board. As an active troop- and police-contributing country, Nepal is increasing the number of women in its army and police forces, who also serve in United Nations peacekeeping missions. The peacekeeping training package includes courses on the protection of women and girls from sexual violence, during and after conflict.

While the new Constituent Assembly is engaged in delivering a constitution as desired by the people of Nepal, instruments for transitional justice are also in the making. The Government's total and unflinching commitment to promoting and protecting human rights has engendered mechanisms, from the centre to the grass-roots level, designed to combat gender and sexual violence.

Emerging from conflict, Nepal knows well that even with the best of measures, the emotional and physical turmoil victims suffer due to sexual violence cannot be healed ex post facto. An enduring solution necessitates the implementation of robust preventive policies, which Nepal fully supports. Likewise, Nepal stands ready to join hands in all efforts to ensure that sexual violence in conflict is shunned everywhere and at all times, that perpetrators are brought to justice, and that the victims are protected and fully rehabilitated.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): I should like to thank the Secretary General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, for their insightful briefings, and commend the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict for their valuable work.

We welcome the increased attention being paid to the issue of women and peace and security in conflict and post-conflict situations by the Security Council and beyond. However, stronger efforts are needed

to address the ongoing systematic and widespread violations. Women and girls continue to be specifically targeted in conflicts and sexual violence is often used as a tactic of war. Women and girls are also vulnerable in post-conflict situations, especially in contested political processes, ceasefires and the early days of the implementation of peace agreements.

Sadly, the tragedy unfolding every day right across our border in Syria constitutes a vivid example of the urgency of the issue, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2014/181). It is high time to focus on the ways and means of implementation by sharing best practices and talking about specific measures. Needless to say, the elimination of the root cause of conflicts is the best way to prevent sexual violence and address impunity.

Secondly, every conflict resolution effort or peace and mediation process has a gender dimension. As such, ensuring and increasing women's participation in all aspects of decision-making and policy processes related to the protection of international peace and security is necessary. The importance of ensuring women's effective participation in peace processes and conflict resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, recovery and mediation efforts was emphasized recently by the Commission on the Status of Women. We hope that this call will be reflected in other relevant texts as well.

Further emphasizing the particular vulnerabilities and addressing the specific needs of women and girls in the protection of civilians framework is a third way forward. Three sets of efforts are of particular, practical importance, namely: disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts; security sector reform; and capacity-building in the judicial sector. We applaud the strong will expressed by the Secretary-General to continue and strengthen efforts to implement the policy of zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations. In fact, all international and regional operations should prioritize this issue.

The Secretary-General's report emphasizes violence against women and girls, particularly sexual violence, as a driving factor of displacement and the need to put into place effective measures of protection regarding displaced persons. Let me take this opportunity to touch upon some measures and best practices that Turkey has employed in the camps established for the Syrians fleeing this crisis, as relevant to the women and peace and security agenda.

Information sessions are provided to Syrian families and women in the camps on issues such as maternal health, child mortality, the human rights of women and girls, and domestic violence. In addition, measures to discourage early and family-forced marriages are undertaken. Turkish personnel employed at the camps are regularly trained on the legal framework of international protection and gender-related issues, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Practical training is also given on the prevention of gender-based violence to camp staff at all levels, as well as to security personnel attached to camp settings, including soldiers, police and gendarmerie.

To prevent assaults within camps and to protect vulnerable groups, public areas are continuously lighted and under closed-circuit television surveillance. Special security units are present. In order to facilitate access to justice for survivors, law enforcement facilities are located in the camp areas to deal with potential complaints and protection requests. Outside the camps, Turkey has established violence monitoring and prevention centres in 14 provinces where significant populations of Syrians live. We have more than 90 shelter houses, with a capacity of more than 2,400 beds, that may house Syrian women fleeing domestic or sexual violence. Also, women security personnel are deployed to respond to potential specific needs of women.

In situations of displacement, although primary health care is usually available, the capacity and resources to provide reproductive health and psychosocial support services are often lacking. We have prioritized these services for victims who were targeted before and during their flight. Finding solutions in displacement contexts is a broad issue that requires holistic solutions. Women must be better integrated into decision-making structures, society and the economy. In that respect, we prioritize women's participation in camps, with their inclusion in decision-making and camp administration. Vocational training is available in order to foster the economic empowerment of women. Finally, the enrolment and continuation of girls in school is prioritized as the best way to ensure long-term gender equality.

I am surprised by the baseless accusations of the regime's representative on organ transplant operations in Turkey. Turkey is a democratic country and an open society. What we do for the brotherly Syrian people in

Turkey does not need further explanation. It takes place before the eyes of the international community and in close cooperation with international organizations, including the United Nations agencies. I therefore entrust the evaluation of the remarks spoken before the Council to the members of the Security Council and the wider international community.

In conclusion, I thank the Nigerian presidency, Member States and all relevant United Nations bodies, in addition to the stakeholders at the local, national, regional and global levels that prioritize the issue of violence against women in conflict. Our special thanks go to Special Representative Bangura, whose dedication to fight against sexual violence in conflicts we strongly support.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to thank you, Sir, for convening this important meeting of the Security Council to highlight one of the most serious challenges threatening international peace and security. We also welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2104/181), which provides important information that reflects the enormous challenges impeding the global containment of this scourge.

Sexual violence in conflict is a crime that has harmed far too many people for thousands of years. It knows no borders or age limitations and is not related to any specific culture or ethnic group. This crime is perpetrated without punishment and is used as a tactic of war to destroy the fabric of society and deprive it of the ability to heal and rebuild.

The United Arab Emirates expresses its grave concern over the continued use and spread of this heinous crime, which targets not only women and girls, but also men and boys, and stresses the need to develop an international response within the context of the relevant Security Council resolutions on this issue. While we strongly commend the notable efforts made by Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Team of Experts Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and the 13 United Nations entities to build the resilience of countries to such violence, we reiterate our support for the international protocol, to be launched in the United Kingdom at the forthcoming Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, on the documentation and investigation of sexual violence in conflict in a manner commensurate with the practical measures that the United Kingdom has taken to address this issue and which have received the strong support of our Foreign Minister, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Today we have the political will and a clear international framework which allows us to move from simply condemning this crime to confronting it within the framework of three main pillars.

First, legal deterrence has been actualized in the establishment of the tribunals of Yugoslavia and Rwanda, as well as the Special Court for Sierra Leone, as a practical and first international step towards strengthening global compliance with international criminal law and preventing impunity for those who commit criminal behaviour during conflict. We therefore call for strengthening the jurisprudence of criminal law as well as existing international legal and judicial mechanisms, including the role played by the International Criminal Court, to identify gaps and develop a robust legal framework for preventing sexual violence during conflict.

Secondly, national authorities must be strengthened in the areas of legislation and security sector reform, to ensure their ability to meet the requirements necessary for preventing a culture of impunity and the promotion of the culture of deterrence, accountability and achieving justice and the rule of law. That should lead to a perception of women as agents in the campaign against sexual violence, not only as victims.

In that contex, we call for increasing the resources and capacities of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to strengthen her mandate to provide assistance and to build resilience, not only in countries suffering from conflicts but also in neighbouring countries and refugee camps to which conflict may spread. We hope that the open meeting of the Security Council to be held on Monday on security sector reform will deliberate on this subject, and in particular on the promulgation of military codes of conduct, including in peacekeeping operations.

Thirdly, there is a need to develop an international mechanism for providing adequate protection and support at all levels to the victims of this crime in order to reintegrate them into their communities.

The United Arab Emirates strongly condemns the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war in Syria, and declares its support for all efforts being made to collect data on these crimes in the pursuit of justice at a later stage. We will continue to provide financial and psychological support to affected Syrians in refugee camps in order to guarantee their reintegration and rehabilitation.

In conclusion, we will support all efforts and initiatives undertaken to strengthen international debates about this dangerous phenomenon and in finding practical solutions for preventing the recurrence of this crime. To achieve this purpose, we must innovate and work across borders to extract the price of justice. The United Arab Emirates is committed to playing a key role in that important endeavour.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Ms. Frankinet (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): My delegation first would like to thank Nigeria for convening this debate and for providing Belgium with an opportunity to take part in it. Combating sexual violence in conflict is indeed a priority for Belgium. My country would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/181) and Ms. Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for her unfailing commitment to the cause.

My delegation fully supports the statement made by the observer of the European Union. I would therefore like to focus my statement on some points that are of particular importance for Belgium.

First and foremost, combating impunity is a priority for my country. Security Council resolution 2106 (2013), adopted last year, called for the pursuit of efforts in combating the impunity of perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict. Belgium is particularly concerned about sexual violence committed by members of the police, the army and some armed groups, in particular in Afghanistan and in Côte d'Ivoire. The climate of impunity, characterized by a lack of disciplinary procedures, sanctions and criminal prosecution, significantly contributes to creating a high-risk environment for women and girls.

Belgium would also like to underscore the importance of ensuring access to effective justice for victims of sexual violence. My country is seriously concerned by the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is one of the three target countries of the national Belgian action plan called "Women, peace and security". There is a great gulf between the legislative framework and implementing that framework. Numerous victims have limited access to justice, in particular because of a lack of resources to file a law suit and to get legal aid. Developing appropriate mechanisms to assist victims and to facilitate access to justice is crucial. Implementing a functioning judicial system is also needed in the Central African Republic, where the victims of sexual violence are very vulnerable to being stigmatized and to reprisals.

Furthermore, Belgium shares the Secretary-General's concerns regarding the link between sexual violence and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combattant programmes and security sector reform (SSR) programmes. There is a real need to pay particular and additional attention to the gender dimension when planning, training for and developing DDR and SSR programmes.

Belgium would also like to state its concerns about the impact of conflicts on the rights of the child, in particular regarding forced marriages, prostitution and the exploitation of girls. The presence of armed groups increases the rate of forced and early marriages in a number of countries — for example, Syria and Yemen — where conflict has had devastating consequences for the poorest and most vulnerable girls.

Belgium would like to underscore, as the Secretary-General did, that the end of a conflict does not mean an end of sexual violence. Post-conflict situations create high-risk environments. That must be borne in mind in order to have a comprehensive, consistent approach to combating sexual violence. Along those lines, Belgium supports the Secretary-General's recommendation regarding including the prevention of sexual violence in all peace and cease-fire agreements. Furthermore, as an ardent champion of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, Belgium pays particular importance to the participation of women in all stages of the peace process. Women must have the possibility to decide their own fate and to contribute to preventing and resolving conflicts as well as to building peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mrs. Andelić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important

debate. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, and Ms. Rhoda Misaka for their statements.

We take note of the report (S/2014/181) of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence, submitted to the Security Council for the information of its members, as well as the analysis and recommendations contained therein.

We recognize and welcome the fact that this year the Security Council will be more focused on consolidation efforts aimed at the implementation of its resolutions 2106 (2013) and 2122 (2013). That will be a genuine contribution to the global commitment to end sexual violence in conflict. We are fully committed to addressing all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence in conflict. The protection of women in conflict situations and ending impunity remain our utmost priorities.

In our efforts to end impunity we acknowledge the active advocacy efforts of the United Nations, inter alia with Governments, in addressing sexual violence in armed conflict, particularly of the mandates of the Secretary-General's Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict and Sexual Violence in Conflict. We shall continue to cooperate closely with them in the future as well.

We are also committed to the provisions of the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict adopted by the Foreign Ministers of the Group of Eight in London on 11 April 2013.

We believe that the prosecution of sexual violence crimes, as well as national ownership and responsibility in addressing the root causes of sexual violence in armed conflict, are central to the prevention of such acts in the future. Sexual violence in armed conflict cannot be accepted as a cultural phenomenon. It is not an inevitable consequence of war or a lesser crime. Therefore, we advocate the importance of the victim's access to justice in conflict and post-conflict settings.

In that context, we want to underline the importance of rulings of the international tribunals — the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda — which defined sexual violence as an instrument of warfare and rape as a crime against humanity. In the *Akayesu* case, sexual violence was recognized as an element of genocide. The impact of those two rulings was that hundreds of victims got the courage to testify against perpetrators throughout the world.

Women's political, social and economic empowerment, gender equality and the mobilization of men and boys in an effort to combat all forms of violence against women are essential in long-term efforts to prevent sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations. Therefore, we fully support the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security. As a member of the Executive Board, we shall continue to support all the efforts of UN-Women in this area as well.

We are aware that States bear the primary responsibility to respect and ensure the human rights of all individuals within their territory. Addressing the injustices of sexual violence in armed conflict is critical on two levels. First, it provides support to persons who are survivors of such atrocities; and, secondly, it furthers the transformation from a State affected by violence to one of lasting peace.

Sexual violence is a form of psychosocial torture where the suffering of the victims extends to their families, and through families reflects the entire society, while the suffering does not cease after the act of violence is committed. The victims very often have to fight the outside factor — the stigma of society where the victim is blamed and penalized but the perpetrator is free to have a normal life. That is why we strongly believe that an effective national strategy to end sexual violence must include programmes to challenge the existing culture of impunity for these crimes. It must emphasize the role of all, men and women, as active contributors to change.

We have a track record of definitive action in implementing resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. We were the first country in South-East Europe to develop a comprehensive national action plan for its implementation.

For example, our national action plan mandates that the topics of gender equality and the prohibition of sexual harassment, gender-based violence and discrimination be incorporated into curriculums of policy academies. It requires that a zero-tolerance approach be applied to any form of illicit sexual behaviour of peacekeeping mission personne. And it calls for the creation and

improvement of programmes to provide psychosocial support and economic empowerment to women who are survivors of trafficking or sexual violence.

With the aim of improving the overall situation of women victims of rape, we are making efforts to finalize the process of developing our second action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) for the period 2014-2017, which contains important provisions for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. We are also working on a programme for improving the status of women victims of wartime rape, sexual violence and other forms of torture for the period 2013-2016.

Involving women in conflict prevention and mediation and the deployment of women's protection advisers to United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions is crucial to building and reinforcing peace. We have been working on additional efforts to advance this issue and have adopted a policy that one third of nominated candidates for peacekeeping missions must be women.

This year, Bosnia and Herzegovina presented a candidate for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). If elected, our candidate will place her priority on prevention and raising awareness of these most important issues. She will continue fighting against prejudice and impunity. My country attaches great significance to this candidature and thus hopes to advance the CEDAW agenda.

With regard to the provisions of the report of the Secretary-General and to the visit of Special Representative Zainab Bangura to Bosnia and Herzegovina in June 2013, our authorities provided comments and additional remarks to the Office of the Special Representative.

Finally, I should like to point out that the international community must permanently work on strengthening United Nations efforts to address sexual violence in armed conflict. Bosnia and Herzegovina stands ready to contribute to those efforts.

In addition, I should like to inform the Council that Bosnia and Herzegovina aligns itself with the statement delivered today by the delegation of the European Union.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Serbia.

Mr. Milanović (Serbia): I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his statement and Ms. Zaina Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ms. Rhoda Misaka for their comprehensive briefings.

Serbia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the delegation of the European Union. In my statement, I shall add a few remarks on behalf of my country.

Serbia supports the fight against all forms of violence, especially against sexual and gender-based violence in all circumstances. Sexual violence in armed conflict presents one of the most serious forms of violation and abuse of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In recent years, prevention and suppression and an adequate response to sexual violence in conflict has been the subject of intensive deliberations in the Security Council. We welcome the efforts made to that end. We support the activities undertaken by the Secretary-General and have followed the actions of Ms. Bangura very closely.

Significant efforts have also been made by Member States, civil society and non-governmental organizations in preventing and fighting this crime. However, much more must be done in order to fully eliminate sexual violence in conflicts. My country believes that the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence is of the utmost importance. We support the efforts invested within the United Nations to engage with State and non-State parties and obtain commitments to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence.

We also support the recommendation of the Secretary-General to include the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence in the mandates of peacekeeping and special political missions, as well as to continue with the deployment of women protection advisers in peacekeeping missions and the training of all United Nations peacekeeping personnel using the innovative tools developed by United Nations Action against Sexual Violence partners.

The victims of sexual violence in conflicts are by and large non-combatants, in particular vulnerable population groups such as women and children. We are deeply concerned that refugees and internally displaced persons are at increased risk of sexual violence in conflicts. In some cases, that has led to human trafficking and sexual slavery. All victims of sexual violence must be provided with psychosocial,

economic and legal assistance and non-discriminatory health care, including appropriate services for children and male survivors.

We firmly believe that international activities aimed at addressing sexual violence in conflicts must be coordinated among Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations based on valid information and measurable results.

Proceeding from resolution 1325 (2000), in 2010 Serbia adopted its national action plan for the 2010-2015 period concerning the implementation of the resolution. In addition, Serbia also implements its national strategy for the prevention and suppression of violence against women in the family and intimate partner relationships, adopted in May 2011.

By signing the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in September last year, 144 States, including Serbia, pledged to do more on the prevention of sexual violence in conflict and to better support the victims. In that way, a strong message was sent that sexual violence in conflict is unacceptable and that those responsible will be brought to justice, prosecuted and punished appropriately. We believe that it is necessary to work towards preventing these crimes precisely by raising awareness that they cannot go unpunished. The role played by Governments and by international criminal justice in that regard is very important.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Mashabane (South Africa): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate and for giving us the opportunity to participate. At the outset, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/181).

My delegation acknowledges the significant gains recorded in the past decade towards building political momentum in the fight against the scourge of sexual violence in conflict. Undoubtedly, that has contributed to a more focused, coherent and integrated approach across the United Nations system in addressing this complex and persistent challenge.

The recent report of the Secretary-General warrants serious consideration, given the overwhelming evidence that sexual violence in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict remains systemic and widespread in many parts of the world. We are conscious that the consequences of those egregious crimes are devastating for affected communities.

While the report of the Secretary-General strongly underscores the need for a comprehensive, multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional framework approach to address the prevention of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings, we concur with the Secretary-General's observation that national ownership, leadership and responsibility are key in the prevention of sexual violence. Ultimately, Member States bear the primary legal and moral responsibility for preventing and addressing such crimes.

In the broader framework of prevention, we have long advocated for the explicit referencing of sexual violence in conflict in all the relevant country-specific resolutions, as well as in the authorizations and renewals of the mandates of peacekeeping and special political missions.

We recognize the valuable contribution of the five-point priority agenda of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict as a strategy to address sexual violence in conflict. However, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General, we believe that priority must be given to fostering national ownership, leadership and responsibility to ensure sustainability.

My delegation commends the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in enhancing the capacity-building of civilian and military justice systems to address sexual violence. We believe, however, that significantly more needs to be done by Member States, the United Nations system and the relevant entities in supporting national efforts by States to increase women's participation, leadership and expertise in the rule of law and transitional justice, as well as in advancing accountability measures for serious offences committed against the victims of sexual violence.

My delegation is of the view that civil society and women's organizations are important partners in efforts aimed at preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence and in providing victims and survivors with information and support, towards facilitating their access to health services, legal assistance, basic services and livelihood assistance.

In that regard, Member States, and key United Nations bodies such as the Peacebuilding Commission,

UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme, working with United Nations country teams and peace missions, have a critical role to play in supporting and capacitating the development of civil society and women's organizations at community and local levels. The value of engaging women from different communities in identifying early conflict warning signs, mediating community conflicts, and leading campaigns to prevent sexual and gender-based violence is well documented.

In conclusion, every effort must be made to end impunity by perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict. My delegation therefore affirms its support for the inclusion of sexual violence in the definition of acts prohibited during ceasefires, including the exclusion of perpetrators of sexual violence from amnesty provisions.

The Security Council must also include measures that bring pressure to bear on perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, especially on individuals and parties through the adoption of specific measures, including specific and time-bound protection commitments by all the relevant actors to an armed conflict.

While there is value in developing monitoring mechanisms by the Security Council to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the relevant resolutions, greater participation by women in negotiation and peacemaking processes will allow for greater inclusivity and incorporation of gender perspectives reflective of the interests and concerns of women, thereby contributing to the sustainability of peace efforts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Hassan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): First, I should like to convey my congratulations to you, Mr. President, on having organized this open debate on this important matter, namely, conflict-related sexual violence. I should also like to congratulate you on your presidency this month. Many important matters have been drawn to the attention of the international community of late, in particular regarding our continent, Africa.

I should like to reiterate the fact that among States that are particularly involved in protecting women in conflict and on the question of sexual violence in conflict much progress has been made in our country since 2005. The Sudan has implemented resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and has established several specialized centres at the community level to step up the role of women and to hold women's consultations on equality.

I should like to mention that special programmes on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration have been particularly important in highlighting women's roles. Those have been carried out in coordination with the relevant bodies of the United Nations, including UN-Women. Furthermore, we are combating sexual violence, and have done so since 2005. To that end, we have set up a special unit affiliated with the Ministry of Justice to combat sexual violence against women and girls.

In the legal and judicial spheres, the Office of the Prosecutor-General for crimes in Darfur, which was set up pursuant to the peace agreement, has established an investigation of reports from victims and complaints have been made. That is above and beyond the efforts made by the advisory council on human rights, the Ministry for Social Planning and the Ministry to combat violence against women. Those are bodies linked to our other main body.

This month, we have begun to implement our 10-year action plan to help promote human rights, in particular women's rights. That has been commended by the independent expert, and we would have liked to see that reflected in the report (S/2014/181), especially our efforts in the area of sexual violence against women.

Despite the progress made, paragraph 50 of the report under consideration refers to the situation in Darfur and mentions an increase in reports of conflict-related sexual violence. In these types of discussions, we are used to the date of issuance and publication of the report being mentioned. We want to know about such reports. When we talk about different reports, we want to know which reports we are talking about.

That is why we are asking for a clear procedure to ensure the veracity of information and its sources. In several passages, the report talks about constraints imposed by the Government on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). That is a reference to some activities of the security apparatus of UNAMID's military component. Apparently, UNAMID is being asked not to go to certain areas. However, when it talks about UNAMID's civilian component, which has a unit for protecting women against sexual violence in armed conflict, it

does have permission. Therefore, we did provide access. In that regard, I think we are talking about erroneous information in the report.

The report also states that armed men in military uniforms attacked women and were responsible for sexual violence. That is not true. I think that we should ensure the veracity of the information and check sources before it is put into the report. We did not prevent the investigator from gaining access. We have a clear procedure in place when it comes to impunity and violence against women, which I have already talked about.

We underscore the need to protect women against violence, and against sexual violence in particular. My Government would like to reiterate its readiness to continue cooperating with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We have sought to coordinate her visit but we have not been able to do so. Despite that, the Special Representative is very welcome. She can come see what is taking place and check that the information is true.

This is a very sensitive matter. Once again, I would like to underscore that the principle of protecting women during armed conflict is a noble principle and it should not be politicized.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Le Hoai Trung (Viet Nam): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 10 member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and my own country, Viet Nam.

We commend the Nigerian presidency for convening today's open debate on women and peace and security with a focus on sexual violence in armed conflict. We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/181) and we thank him and his Special Representative for their briefings to the Council.

Sexual violence in both armed conflict and post-conflict situations continues to affect and threaten the well-being of women and girls in many regions of the world. Indeed, sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations leaves lasting scars for nations, communities and, above all, its victims, and may have a significant bearing on the durability of peace and prospects for sustainable development.

ASEAN strongly condemns all forms of violence against women and girls, in particular sexual violence. We condemn the use of rape and other sexual violence as a tactic of war to deliberately target civilian populations. ASEAN therefore welcomes the important actions taken by the Council to address that atrocious crime, including its landmark resolutions 1325 (2000), as well as subsequent relevant resolutions and presidential statements. Those actions, together with the enormous efforts by the entire United Nations and the international community, have helped raise awareness about the catastrophic impact of sexual violence in armed conflict and post conflict situations, which needs to be addressed in a comprehensive manner.

In that connection, ASEAN is of the view that the international community, with the United Nations at the centre, must redouble its efforts to address the three interrelated dimensions — namely, the prevention of sexual violence, care for its victims and the empowerment of women.

First, the prevention of armed conflict-related sexual violence must be addressed at its root cause, that is, the prevention of armed conflicts itself. Mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution must be implemented. States must promote the rule of law, justice, good governance, democracy, poverty eradication, sustainable development, gender equality and respect for and protection of human rights at national and international levels as the means of tackling the root causes of conflicts.

Secondly, breaking the silence and raising awareness are essential to the prevention of sexual violence and the protection of victims. Political discussion and initiatives at international and regional levels are of crucial importance to send the message of intolerance toward sexual violence, and that must combined with measures aimed at raising awareness at the grass-roots level. Therefore, eliminating sexual violence requires not only sanctioning perpetrators, but transforming the mindset of societies and the underlying economic and social conditions that allow sexual violence to thrive.

Thirdly, victims of sexual violence must be provided with multisectoral assistance and services tailored to their specific needs. They must be protected against stigmatization and exclusion, and given the

opportunity and capability to re-engage and reintegrate with their communities.

Fourthly, the full and equal political, social and economic participation of women is key to addressing sexual violence at its roots. The inclusion of women and their priorities in all aspects of a peace process is crucial. Attention should also be paid to both civilian women and those having served in the armed forces or been involved in military activities during their reintegration efforts.

Lastly, while States bear the primary responsibility for preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence, the United Nations system has a special role to play, as mandated by its Member States. ASEAN recognizes the constructive role of civil society, the media and other stakeholders, many of whom are working hard to protect the rights and interests of women under difficult situations, and encourages them to work closely with States and the United Nations system in those common endeavours.

ASEAN represents a region where women have a long tradition of playing an important role in national economic and political life, during conflicts, in conflict resolution, as well as in post-conflict national reconstruction.

ASEAN is strongly committed to the prevention and fight against sexual violence, particularly sexual violence in armed conflict. All ASEAN member States are parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and have supported all the relevant Security Council resolutions and presidential statements related to women and peace and security, including those on sexual violence in the context of armed conflict.

At the regional level, ASEAN has established the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission of Human Rights and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children. Initiatives like Stop Violence Against Women and workshops on women, security and peace in ASEAN are also important steps undertaken by ASEAN to raise awareness on the issue.

Much remains to be done to address the challenges faced by women and girls in armed conflicts, as well as in post-conflict situations. ASEAN reaffirms our strong support and commitment to the implementation of the relevant Council resolutions to end sexual violence whenever and wherever it occurs.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Mrs. Schwalger (New Zealand): New Zealand wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General, Special Representative Bangura and Ms. Misaka for their statements. We also thank the delegation of Nigeria for convening this debate today. It is important that the Council continues to state, in the clearest possible terms, that conflict-related sexual violence will not be tolerated and that it makes all efforts to give those words effect.

We have seen some significant steps forward since the Council last convened an open debate to consider this issue in 2013 (see S/PV.7044), including the adoption of resolution 2106 (2013). Over the past year, we have also welcomed specific commitments made by a number of countries to combat sexual violence in armed conflict.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2014/181) on conflict-related sexual violence is sobering; it illustrates the scale and severity of the challenges that remain. It is clear that political commitments need to translate into concrete actions on the ground. The international community must address the use of sexual violence to intimidate and maintain social control, reprisals against those who report crimes, the targeting of children and the lack of access to justice, as well as many other difficult challenges.

In the face of those challenges, what can be done? First and foremost, national Governments themselves must show leadership. As an international community, we must support efforts by national Governments and by other actors, including civil society. The Security Council must also continue to focus on the issue.

If lasting progress is to be made, then we must focus on preventing conflict-related sexual violence from occurring in the first place by dealing with root causes. That requires national Governments, supported by the United Nations, to emphasize better education at all levels within communities — from schools to health centres to the military — in order to help shift social attitudes and improve understanding of sexual violence.

The Security Council must ensure that there is an ongoing systematic focus on prevention, including in all the relevant country-specific resolutions, in

peacekeeping mandate authorizations and renewals, and in special political missions. Ensuring strong monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements will help to identify situations of risk early so that they can be addressed. That will also require coordination and information-sharing across United Nations activities.

We strongly encourage the ongoing training of United Nations peacekeepers to protect populations from sexual violence. Peacekeepers can provide a strong line of prevention and response, both in terms of recognizing early warning signs and reporting them, as well as addressing appropriately instances where sexual violence has occurred. Good quality training that is comprehensive and contextual should ensure that peacekeepers are able to recognize and respond to those most vulnerable to sexual violence. That includes, for example, persons with disabilities who have a heightened risk of sexual violence but often face challenges to both prevent and report sexual violence.

Women's protection advisers play a critical role in prevention and response, and New Zealand calls for more advisers to be deployed to the relevant missions. Consideration should also be given to ensuring adequate deployment of child protection advisers, reflecting the fact that young people are often victims.

Effective accountability is vital to hold perpetrators to account, to ensure recognition for victims and to deter future crimes. We acknowledge the important work done by international tribunals and the International Criminal Court in strengthening international law on sexual violence. The focus the Council has paid to accountability in resolution 2106 (2013) was welcome, and we must continue that trend by ensuring that accountability and access to justice are part of all our conversations about conflict-related sexual violence.

At the national level, effective accountability requires strong domestic laws, institutions and practical mechanisms that actually enable access to justice. We applaud the engagement so far of United Nations actors, in particular the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, to support national authorities to achieve accountability. New Zealand encourages the continuation and deepening of that support.

New Zealand is one of the 144 countries that endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, an initiative of the United Kingdom. The Declaration demonstrated that the political will exists to tackle conflict-related sexual violence. The upcoming Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, to be held in London in June, provides an important opportunity to grow the political will and identify practical actions while reflecting on some of the concerns raised in the Council today.

New Zealand strongly endorses the Secretary-General's and others' call for all parties to conflict responsible for acts of sexual violence to cease that horrendous conduct and to make protection commitments. We also call for the further strengthening and implementation of the protection framework while ensuring that protection is extended to those most vulnerable to conflict-related sexual violence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Tin (Myanmar): Allow me to express our appreciation to the Nigerian presidency of the Council for organizing this open debate.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam on behalf of the members of the Association of Southeast Asian States.

Let me join the preceding speakers in condemning all forms of sexual violence against women and girls in conflict and non-conflict areas. We also commend the efforts of the United Nations in developing a broad spectrum of norms on women and peace and security for the prevention of sexual violence against vulnerable groups of women and girls across the world.

My delegation also wishes to thank Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for soliciting our views while preparing the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/181) on conflict-related sexual violence and for incorporating some of our responses. We hardly need to stress the importance of the accuracy and objectivity of the information. We feel that reporting could be more balanced if it highlighted not only the problems but also the measures taken by the State concerned in response to those problems.

In Myanmar, sexual violence is a crime strongly abhorred by our traditional values and strictly forbidden by law and by our culture. As such, severe legal action is taken against the perpetrators of any reported case, whether by civilians or the members of security forces. The existing penal code strongly prescribes a severe

penalty for those who have committed acts of sexual violence.

As conflict naturally breeds violence, we recognize the importance of addressing the reported problems of sexual violence that may occur in conflicts. However, incidents committed by unruly individuals cannot be construed as the policy of a given institution. The most important point is to refuse to condone any act of sexual violence.

In Myanmar, all criminal cases filed with authorities were properly investigated and the perpetrators were punished according to the law. There have been a number of cases where military personnel have been prosecuted for committing acts of sexual violence. The accusations that have been made in some quarters suggesting that the State Constitution grants immunity from prosecution to military personnel who commit criminal offences are therefore totally groundless and appear to be politically motivated. With the reformist Government now paying greater attention to promoting democratic values than ever before, members of the armed forces have been clearly instructed not to commit any crimes, including those of sexual violence. A series of capacity-building workshops has been held to educate them on human rights, and the curriculums in military training schools also include instruction on the laws relating to the prevention of sexual violence.

As a State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Myanmar has taken steps to eliminate discrimination and violence against women, in line with the Convention's provisions, and we are currently implementing a 10-year national strategic plan for the advancement of women. Myanmar's three-year-old democratic reforms have also created an environment more conducive to the protection of women and girls. Our new-found freedom of expression and of the media has emboldened everyone to file complaints about any wrongful acts without fear. Any abuse of rights can be reported to our national human-rights commission. The issue of the protection of women has also attracted the attention of the legislative body, and a law banning violence against women is being drafted with the assistance of the United Nations. That important legislation is expected to be finalized for enactment very soon.

On 31 October 2013, Myanmar organized for the first time an open day on women, peace and security, commemorating resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. The event, designed to promote awareness of the issue, was attended by more than 200 participants, including senior Government and United Nations officials, parliamentarians, development cooperation partners and civil society. The Government has also conducted surveys and research projects aimed at obtaining reliable data for facilitating effective measures against sexual violence. Seminars on violence against women are being organized in various towns across the country and counselling is also being made available to women in need of such services. In Myanmar, civil society and non-governmental organizations are now actively engaged in activities to raise awareness and prevent sexual violence. In that regard, we are also working with UN-Women and the United Nations Population Fund to implement projects designed to protect women and girls from sexual violence.

Myanmar is also making great progress in its strenuous peacemaking efforts to end its 60-year-long conflict, which have produced ceasefire agreements with almost all ethnic groups. The expected forthcoming signing of a nationwide ceasefire agreement will be a watershed in our peacebuilding process as it helps to create the conditions needed to end violence.

As much as we all condemn the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, we should also deplore the exploitation of this sensitive issue by certain groups as a tool for achieving their own political goals. The problem of sexual violence cannot be solved by an approach of naming and blaming. The international community should rather take a constructive approach by sharing information on violations and assisting Member States in their efforts to address the issue. In that regard, my delegation has noted with interest the recommendations and framework elements presented in the Secretary-General's report. We also wish to stress the importance of national ownership, leadership and responsibility in preventing sexual violence in conflict. In its exercise of that responsibility, Myanmar would welcome assistance from the United Nations in enhancing its efforts and capacity to protect women and girls from sexual violence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): Croatia is grateful to the Nigerian presidency for convening this important meeting on an issue that Croatia considers very significant.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union, and I would like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

We strongly advocate further support for the agenda on women and peace and security at all levels, national, regional and global, and today's debate is a good and valuable step in that direction. As indicated in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2014/181), sexual violence in conflict is one of the greatest and most persistent injustices in the world today. It is also one of the most neglected.

Viewed in the broader context, sexual violence is one of the symptoms of a distorted social order characterized by conflict, injustice and insecurity. Sexual violence adds to ethnic and other divisions, reinforcing insecurity and instability, and leaves its victims with terrible physical and psychological wounds, pain and humiliation. There is no doubt whatever that the use of rape and sexual violence exacerbates conflicts and perpetuates them long after active hostilities are over. Crimes of sexual violence in conflict inflict lasting scars on individuals, families and societies, making reconciliation and peacebuilding much more difficult. Peace and reconciliation require a firm and consistent process and a lot of determination and patience in order to ascertain the truth, something that is particularly difficult when rape is used as a tool of war against women, children and men.

Sexual violence has been used in all recent wars and conflicts to pursue political and military aims, including in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. It has been used to dominate, to terrify and humiliate opponents, to uproot communities and ethnic groups, and thus to contribute to the collapse of entire societies for generations to come. Based on our own tragic experiences of the aggression to which Croatia was exposed at the beginning of the '90s, in which rape was also used as a method of intimidation and terror, we are convinced that the issue of sexual violence in conflict can be adequately addressed only through a comprehensive approach. The Croatian Government has therefore proposed a new law for the protection of victims of sexual violence in war, with the aim of legislating the rights of such victims, together with an accompanying system of compensation and rehabilitation.

Through the extensive experience of war and post-conflict management that Croatia unfortunately gained on its own territory, we may be able to make a significant contribution to wider global efforts to prevent and combat sexual violence in war and conflict. In that regard, I am pleased to announce that an International Conference on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict will be held in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, from 29 to 30 May, jointly organized by the Croatian Ministry of Veterans' Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme. The Conference will be titled "Delivering Justice for the Past, Preventing Abuse in the Future", with its main purpose that of sharing lessons learned in addressing the rights of victims of sexual violence in Croatia and other countries of the former Yugoslavia, and of disseminating those lessons around the world through the United Nations and other systems. The Conference can also be seen as a building block for the upcoming Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, to be held in London.

Croatia is of the opinion that more can and must be done to combat the issue of sexual violence in conflict, and particularly to address the prevailing culture of impunity for such crimes. The non-reporting of sexual violence in war and conflict is another key problem, since it affects not only social perceptions of what is in fact a widespread problem, but also the work of all the relevant bodies and institutions. We fully recognize the importance of breaking the silence surrounding sexual violence in conflicts and changing the public consciousness so that the shame and embarrassment become that of the perpetrator. Civil society organizations can play a very important and vital role in that regard.

A book entitled *Sunčica* — which means "sunny" in English — published in Croatia in 2011, contains the testimonies of imprisoned women against whom the crime of rape was committed during the war in Croatia. *Sunny* has also become a strong civil movement in Croatia during recent years, with courageous women finally breaking the social and intimacy barriers that occur in cases of war-time rape. Based on the book, the movie *Sunny* was filmed, with the support of the Croatian Ministry for Veterans Affairs, and was recently premiered in Zagreb. It is the first documentary film in which the victims of sexual violence in war, including male victims, have come out to speak of their suffering.

At the global level, there is now increased awareness on the part of the international community about the problem of wartime sexual violence. We have to build on that positive momentum and take concrete

action to address impunity and strengthen specific goals — comprehensive reform of legislation on wartime sexual violence and reparation for victims, speeding up the processing of war crimes, implementing the witness-protection programme, changing the societal mentality, and severe punishment for perpetrators, not victims.

Finally, we believe that the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict provides a solid framework to step up our efforts in preventing and responding to sexual violence and bringing about justice for millions of victims of sexual violence, not only in conflict but also in post-conflict situations and beyond.

As a member of the group of global champions of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, Croatia will spare no effort to take a more prominent role in preventing and combating sexual violence in war and conflict and to continue to give its firm support to all areas of the women and peace and security agenda.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Mr. Logar (Slovenia): I would like to thank the Nigerian presidency for convening the meeting and organizing this timely discussion. My appreciation goes also to the Secretary-General, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ms. Rhoda Misaka of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

I also align myself with the statements delivered by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of Austria on behalf of the Human Security Network. Allow me to add a few thoughts from our national perspective.

Slovenia traditionally pays special attention to the empowerment of women and the protection and promotion of their rights. As has been recalled many times, the protection and advancement of women's rights is of key importance for stability, sustainable peace and prosperity at all levels.

On the other hand, armed conflict and instability often disproportionately affect women. In times of instability, violence against women, including sexual violence, increases. It is therefore important to include women in conflict prevention and resolution efforts as well as post-conflict recovery and reconciliation.

Furthermore, sexual violence is used in conflict as a weapon of war to humiliate and injure victims, their families and entire communities, and often continues after the conflict has ended. Victims, not just women and girls but also men and boys, are traumatized and stigmatized forever. Those heinous acts remain vivid in the recollections of whole communities for generations, as we are reminded by the legacy of conflict in the Western Balkans and Rwanda. Such acts should not be repeated and must be stopped in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Syria, Mali and Somalia and in other situations of concern at the present time.

We should not forget that sexual exploitation and abuse in conflict and post-conflict situations is not only committed by members of the parties to the conflict, but also by United Nations personnel. Therefore, we welcome the developments in applying the United Nations zero-tolerance policy in certain situations on the Council's agenda. We call on the Council to include all aspects of the policy in all resolutions renewing or establishing peacekeeping mandates. It is important that the United Nations set an example by practicing it preaches.

Although the commitment to accountability and the fight against impunity regarding sexual violence in conflict has been reiterated many times — again in today's discussion — and enshrined in Council resolution 2106 (2013), there are many obstacles to ensuring perpetrators' accountability and access to justice for victims of sexual crimes in conflict.

All of the issues mentioned were also raised at the third seminar of the Initiative on Mediation in the Mediterranean Region, held in Slovenia last month on the topic of promoting a culture of mediation and prevention in the Mediterranean, where the need to put the issue of sexual violence in conflict at the top of the agenda was highlighted.

The Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court play an important part in upholding accountability for perpetrators and the fight against impunity. Their role should be seen as an important element in establishing peace and security and the rule of law. We would also like to commend the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Justice Rapid Response Initiative and the UN-Women sexual and gender-based violence justice expert roster in assisting the international community and affected

countries through their expertise in addressing conflict-related sexual violence.

We believe that the primary responsibility for the prosecution of conflict-related crimes, including conflict-related sexual violence, lies with States. In that regard, allow me to recall the initiative of Slovenia, the Netherlands, Belgium and Argentina to consider the possibility of adopting a new international instrument on mutual legal assistance and extradition aimed at effective investigation and prosecution, by domestic jurisdictions, of the crimes that are of the most serious concern internationally.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): We thank you, Madam President, for convening today's open debate on this important subject. We also thank the Secretary-General and Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for their briefings. We appreciate the statement made by the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Rhoda Misaka.

Sexual violence, rape, molestation and different forms of sexual abuse committed by individuals or groups are egregious and reprehensible crimes. Sexual violence has been systematically used as an instrument of war in many parts of the world, as testimonies this morning demonstrated. Sexual predators target vulnerable women and girls, men and boys. Their criminal acts inflict deep trauma, leave lasting scars, cause serious moral harm and impose huge social and economic costs on communities. Sexual violence remains one of the major causes of people's fleeing from their homes and of the resultant displacement. Those crimes constitute a threat to international peace and security.

The United Nations has done a lot, but needs to do more. As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/181) notes, the situation has actually worsened in certain parts of the world. Our collective efforts should therefore focus on converting commitments into concrete action-oriented preventive measures. We should collectively create a culture of zero tolerance for sexual violence. In that context, I would like to highlight the following points.

First, the Security Council should continue to address the women and peace and security agenda in accordance with its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. That mandate pertains to sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations. Those parameters should be fully respected in order to preserve the strong consensus that exists on the issue. We should guard against the inclusion of peripheral issues that relate to women's rights in general, or which do not fall within the Council's mandate.

Secondly, ending impunity should continue to remain the highest priority. Perpetrators should be brought to justice and they should be removed from their positions of authority. We strongly endorse the appeal Special Representative Bangura made today to shift the stigma from the victims to the perpetrators of sexual crimes.

Thirdly, more human and financial resources should be invested in security sector reform and disarmament demobilization and reintegration efforts to erect barriers against sexual violence. In post-conflict situations, too, close attention should be given to punitive and retributive justice. In that context, capacity-building of the transitional criminal justice mechanisms, including increased prosecutorial capacity, should be accorded priority.

Fourthly, United Nations personnel operating in areas of armed conflict should be properly trained and equipped to provide services on the ground for victims of sexual violence. The inter-agency network Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict is a useful platform. The inclusion of women protection advisers in peacekeeping operations is making a difference on the ground.

Fifthly, multidimensional peacekeeping missions with relevant mandates play a key role in combating sexual violence. As a leading participant in peacekeeping, Pakistan has contributed to that effort. Gender sensitization has been a mandatory part of our training for peacekeepers and is a core cultural value. Pakistani women have also served as police officers, doctors and nurses in various missions in Asia, Africa and the Balkans. Our feedback about the work of police officers is positive. Women police officers instinctively and because of their training show empathy to women trapped in conflict situations who in turn relate instantly to those police officers.

Sixthly, women should participate in larger numbers in the decision-making processes on ceasefires, peace agreements and post-conflict peacebuilding.

Finally, the best way to eliminate conflict-related sexual violence is to prevent and resolve conflicts and address the cross-cutting issues of governance, the rule of law and economic development. The issues of sexual violence and the overall objectives of protecting the rights of women and children need to be pursued by the Council and the United Nations system in a holistic manner within their respective mandates. That requires a comprehensive multisectoral and multidimensional approach, as suggested by the Secretary-General.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Barriga (Liechtenstein): The recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/181) once again illustrates the alarming increase in sexual violence, which is often used as a method of warfare. With the adoption of resolution 2106 (2013), the Council has provided us with important tools to end that abominable practice. Nevertheless, we continue to face a major gap in the actual implementation of those measures. A lack of prioritization, capacity, adequate training, services — and ultimately resources — are the main reasons.

Liechtenstein was therefore pleased to be among the 144 States that endorsed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict initiated by the United Kingdom. The Declaration sends a clear message that we all must redouble our efforts in that regard. We sincerely hope that the upcoming summit in London in June will help bring about increased impetus and better implementation.

A major barrier to the effective protection of women from sexual violence is the continuing culture of impunity. We welcome the focus of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on the fight against sexual violence in her work. Crimes of sexual violence play a role in nearly every case under investigation. That speaks both to the startling prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence and to the ICC's commitment to holding perpetrators of those crimes accountable.

Nevertheless, justice for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence continues to be the exception to the rule, and holding perpetrators accountable has proven to be exceedingly difficult. Generally speaking, it is crucial that evidence be professionally collected at the earliest possible stage. That process may be assisted, inter alia, by the Justice Rapid Response initiative.

Survivors of sexual violence also only rarely receive reparations. In that context, we particularly commend the work of the ICC Trust Fund for Victims, which adopts a gender perspective across all its activities and assists survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

Protection issues are crucial, but we need the same level of emphasis on participation. The Secretary-General reports that sexual violence is also specifically being used as a method of curtailing the participation of women and girls in public life. That is a very worrisome development. Indeed, the voices of survivors, especially of sexual violence, are rarely heard. We must do more to ensure that survivors and their representatives and organizations are at the table when we work towards ending sexual violence. We are convinced that such an approach will have a strong impact on the willingness of the relevant actors to bring about change.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Ms. Muthukumarana (Sri Lanka): Let me join previous speakers in thanking the delegation of Nigeria for convening today's open debate. I would also like to thank the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict for her statement.

In times of conflict and post-conflict situations, attention should be paid to all forms of violence against civilians, but especially to sexual violence. Conflict often creates family dislocations, shattered livelihoods and sole breadwinners, with the resulting negative consequences. Single mothers are often the product of conflict, and, in some cases, that increases vulnerability to sexual harassment, exploitation and violence.

The Government of Sri Lanka has implemented a firm policy on sexual violence and taken firm action on reported cases of violence against women and girls during the conflict and the post-conflict periods in my country. Sri Lanka has deplored all violence against women and has a well-established policy against gender-based violence and all forms of sexual abuse. During the conflict period, from January 2007 to May 2009, seven security forces personnel were reported to have been involved in five incidents of sexual violence in Northern Province. That is out of a total of 125 persons accused in 119 incidents for the entirety of

Northern Province. In the post-conflict period, from May 2009 to May 2012, 10 security forces personnel were reported to have been involved in six incidents of sexual violence in Northern Province. That is out of a total of 307 persons accused in 256 incidents for the entire Northern Province. The involvement of security forces personnel as a percentage of the total accused stands at 5.6 per cent in the conflict period and 3.3 per cent in the post-conflict period.

It is interesting to note that the involvement of security forces personnel as a percentage of the total incidents of sexual violence is quite low, both in the conflict and post-conflict periods. In a majority of the aforementioned cases, the perpetrators have been close relatives or neighbours of the victim. Against that backdrop, the Sri Lankan authorities reject the inferences by certain organizations and reports that the presence of the military contributes to the insecurity of women and girls in the former conflict-affected areas.

Legal action has been taken by the Government in all of the above-mentioned cases in which Sri Lankan Security Forces personnel were involved. The military has taken stringent action, including discharging offenders or imposing other punishments in accordance with the military and penal codes. Furthermore, charges have also been filed in normal criminal courts. Along with the application of the law to personnel in breach of the law, the Sri Lankan military continues to provide large-scale human rights training with the assistance of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Certain organizations are involved in propagating false reports against the Sri Lankan military of sexual violence. A recent report was authored by Ms. Yasmin Sooka. That report made accusations, often with disturbing details, without providing sufficient details, such as to the time, place and the identity of victims, to enable investigations and prosecutions. Those accusations were subsequently repeated in further publications of various organizations, thereby contributing to forming an opinion that is propagated without evidence. None of those allegations have been substantiated by verifiable data in any of the documents. Significantly, no credible evidence has been directly brought to the attention of Government authorities by any of the parties. The Government has not been provided the evidence — which is claimed to be in the possession of the authors of these reports — in order to investigate and respond.

I would like to also point out the other extensive measures the Government has taken to cater to women and girls to ensure that their well-being and security is protected. The Government has established women and children's police desks staffed by female police officers in police stations in the Northern and the Eastern Provinces. Specially trained police officers function at such desks which provide an enabling and protective environment for children, women and girls and their parents to report incidents of abuse and exploitation.

The Government has given special consideration to uplifting the social and economic status of war widows. Bilateral assistance has already been obtained to initiate a self-employment programme for war widows in Batticaloa in collaboration with the Self Employed Women's Association, based in India. A local non-governmental organization, the Parents of Servicemen Missing in Action and Association of War-Affected Women, educates soldiers, youth and community leaders about international standards relating to war and promotes the economic and social development of women across conflict lines.

We note that this year report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2014/181) contains references to the Human Rights Council resolution on Sri Lanka (A/HRC/25/L.1/Rev.1), accountability and a comprehensive truth and reconciliation commission. We are disappointed that such issues, which have no relevance to that before us, have been dragged into this report. The contents of the Human Rights Council resolution have been rejected and disputed by the Government. We would like to respectfully point out that the Government established an internal mechanism for dealing with the causes of conflict and to make recommendations. The report of that body — the Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission — offers detailed observations and recommendations based on the principles of international humanitarian law. The national action plan developed on the basis of the recommendations of the Commission is now being implemented.

My delegation hopes that international discussion of issues of this nature will facilitate broader appreciation of the inherent challenges and practical outcomes based on realities on the ground. States should be consulted on all aspects of international actions to combat sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, including the provision of assistance. In that process, respect must be maintained for the fundamental

principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that Sri Lanka will proactively continue with its efforts to enhance and develop protection mechanisms with regard to the protection of women and children.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. van Oosterom (Netherlands): My delegation welcomes this debate on the important report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2014/181). The fact that the report covers incidents of conflict-related sexual violence in over 20 countries confirms the urgency of our meeting today.

We fully align ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. In the interests of time, I will deliver a shortened version of my speech; the full text is available.

In the view of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, conflict-related sexual violence is not a stand-alone problem that can be solved in isolation. We need a fully integrated approach that addresses deeply rooted gender inequalities and works to empower women.

We pay tribute to the work of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Bangura. It is a privilege to sit next to her and an honour to support her work. We agree with her that now is the time to focus on progressing from principles, goals and ambitions to concrete action, operational measures and practical tools.

The Netherlands seeks to use such practical tools in all domains of our foreign policy: the promotion of peace, justice and development. When it comes to peace and security, we contribute civilian and military personnel to multilateral missions. Addressing gender issues and sexual violence in conflict is an integral part of our national preparation for such missions. For instance, we currently have a contingent deployed in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. All of our police and military officer have received predeployment training on gender, human rights and international humanitarian law.

We also offer regular training on gender issues to military personnel, diplomats and police, as well as to civilian experts and activists. We make civilian expertise on gender and combating sexual violence available to United Nations missions, for example to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With regard to justice, we welcome the focus Ms. Bangura and United Nations Action have put on issues of impunity and accountability around conflict-related sexual violence. National legal systems in conflict-affected countries can be weakened in the course of the conflict and in the reconstruction phase. The Netherlands therefore attaches great value to legitimate and professional justice systems. We therefore support rule of law programming in several countries on a bilateral basis.

There is also the need for a clear role for the International Criminal Court (ICC) and other tribunals. My country very much supports the broad jurisdiction of the ICC on the issue of conflict-related sexual violence. It has a very strong preventative effect.

The report of the Secretary-General also shows that we need to do even more to optimize the protection of women and girls, who are the primary victims of sexual violence. Despite our collective efforts in that regard, women and girls will face the long-term consequences of such violence. They deserve and have the right to sexual and reproductive health, including safe abortion services. To recall what our French colleague said this morning, to withhold such services to victims of sexual violence is to add insult to injury.

Women and girls are never only victims, though. We know about the resilience of many survivors. We also know that empowered women make the difference: they participate in decision-making and take up leadership roles, particularly on issues of conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding and reconstruction.

We believe in the power of women as agents of peace and as representatives of communities living in conflict. As women are empowered, sexual violence, causes of gender inequality and accountability will more likely be addressed as integral parts of peace and reconstruction processes. For example, we are working with UN-Women to support the Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace and Democracy to make their voices heard. The initiative of the women of Syria inspired many and offered a new window of hope for a political solution to the horrific conflict in Syria.

We welcome further commitment of the Security Council to the full agenda of resolution 1325 (2000) as we try to do in the Netherlands. Our national Action Plan 1325 promotes civil society programming in support of women's political participation and leadership. We support women's rights organizations around the globe and we contribute to several United Nations trust funds, such as the United Nations Women's Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women.

Together we must continue our common efforts to combat the crime of sexual violence in conflict through concrete and collective action. Rest assured that the Netherlands will continue to be a partner of the United Nations, the Special Representative and Member States in this important endeavour.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Seger (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): The Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000) more than 13 years ago. Nevertheless, as my colleague from Liechtenstein has just recalled, sexual violence, especially rape, in countries in conflict and post-conflict situations, remains a sad reality. We cannot turn a blind eye on those human rights violations.

Switzerland therefore thanks your delegation, Madame President, for convening this debate, and the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/181) on conflict-related sexual violence, which emphasizes the scope of the problem.

In the majority of the situations that have been observed, sexual violence is perpetrated as much by Government forces as by armed opposition groups. Our response to that must be firm: there shall be no impunity for the perpetrators of those crimes, and we will not rest until justice is done. In that regard, we would like to emphasize the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the need for countries to foster national ownership, leadership and responsibility and to strengthen the capacity of their civilian and military justice systems.

In that context, we would do well to recall the complementary role of the International Criminal Court when States are either unable or unwilling to render justice to the victims of acts of serious sexual violence insofar as they constitute crimes against humanity or war crimes.

We welcome the programmes for training and consciousness-raising as well as the monitoring measures such as those being pursued within the framework of human rights due diligence policy of the African Union Mission in Somalia. Regular reports on sexual and gender-based violence along with a zero-tolerance policy vis-à-vis the perpetrators of such crimes are indispensable.

Last March, the Human Rights Council in Geneva hosted a panel on sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which again brought to our attention the massive character of violence against women in that context. Armed conflicts and the weakness of State institutions, especially the judiciary and the security forces, are the primary destabilizing factors. The high incidence of sexual violence, especially rape, is a source of grave concern, all the more so because systematic impunity creates a context that encourages such violations.

Three months ago, just before the second Geneva Conference, 50 women from across Syria shared with us their priorities regarding the issue of sexual violence. They stressed that rendering justice was essential. Over a year ago, Switzerland, together with more than 60 other States, called on the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. That demand is more timely now than ever, and in that regard we support France's initiative to draft a resolution to that end.

It is also crucial, in the early stages of a peace process, to adopt gender-sensitive policies and measures to protect women and girls from sexual exploitation, early marriage, human trafficking and rape. What other options do we have for action? While there may be no ready-made solutions, I would like to explore three areas that are addressed in the report.

We welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation to emphasize the decisive role of civil society, in particular women's organizations and community leaders, in the many efforts to eliminate sexual violence against women. We need to ensure that women's participation in peace negotiations and processes is conducted on an equal footing with men and that the resulting agreements take gender problems into account.

We share the Secretary-General's concerns about the fate of displaced populations, whose majority consists of women and girls. Their limited access to

resources makes them that much more vulnerable to sexual violence and sexual exploitation. We welcome the fact that his recommendations insist that prevention be an integral part of all country-specific resolutions by the Security Council. It is essential that prevention and protection measures be tailored to the context of displacement.

Finally, we share the Secretary-General's concern about the lack of official data on sexual violence. We need reliable data to effectively combat violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in situations of armed conflict and internal disturbances. With the goal of improving data collection, Switzerland supports the Harvard University Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research, which focuses on the development of systematic methodological guidance that can be applied to monitoring, reporting and fact-finding efforts. We continue to believe that such instruments are essential for improving the prevention of crimes of sexual violence.

Finally, allow me to reiterate the importance of linking our efforts to protect and strengthen women's rights with our commitment to promote women's participation. Men, too, have everything to gain from such efforts. The development of a truly global society will be achieved only by insuring the equal participation of women and men in all aspects of the peacemaking, peacebuilding and reconstruction processes. Equal participation is a prerequisite for comprehensively addressing gender-based violence, as well as its causes and its consequences. Therefore, Switzerland would like to stress the importance of the latest resolutions on the issue, in particular resolution 2122 (2013). Furthermore, we call upon all actors to continue their efforts for the complete and cohesive implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

In conclusion, we commend Special Representative Zainab Bangura, who has played an outstanding role in drawing up joint strategies with Governments to combat sexual violence. Switzerland congratulates her for the progress made in the implementation of the frameworks and looks forward to hosting the next donor conference of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Namibia.

Mr. Naanda (Namibia): Namibia is pleased to participate in this open debate on sexual violence in conflict under the agenda item "Women and peace and security". I wish to congratulate you, Madam President, and your country, Nigeria, on assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of April 2014. I also wish to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and his Special Representative Zainab Bangura for their informative statements.

Sexual violence has increasingly become a grave concern and has proliferated in conflict and post-conflict situations. Women and girls are raped, forced into prostitution and sexual slavery, and subjected to various sexual acts that leave them with severe physical, psychological and emotional trauma. Their lives are shattered, their hopes are destroyed and they are left with permanent stigma.

The report (S/2014/181) before us clearly indicates that the prevalence of sexual violence during periods of conflicts often leaves lasting legacies, with acute consequences for the security of women and children in the post-conflict era and beyond. That is demonstrated by high levels of rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against women and children in some post-conflict settings, which ultimately has a direct impact on the durability of peace and prospects for sustainable development.

The United Nations, and in particular this body, have convened meetings to deliberate on mitigating factors that can be employed to prevent and or curb such a scourge. However, despite all efforts, the scourge still persists and continues to terrorize communities, thereby posing a serious security concern. That is so because perpetrators are left unpunished and the culture of impunity aggravates conflict cycles.

Fighting sexual violence in conflict is a shared responsibility that requires a broad-based approach that involves the international community, regional and national Governments, civil societies and other stakeholders. National Governments should foster national programmes that take measures aimed at preventing and stopping the occurrence of sexual violence and prosecute perpetrators. In that regard, national stakeholders should be fully engaged in order to foster national ownership, leadership and responsibility. While recognizing that Governments bear the primary responsibility for the safety and rights of women and the protection of all citizens in their countries, the international community should

support those efforts, while fully respecting national sovereignty and focusing on capacity-building and resolving funding and technical difficulties.

Furthermore, it is important to ensure that sexual violence considerations are explicitly and consistently reflected in ceasefire and peace agreements, as well as in all security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes that involve the United Nations. In that regard, the adoption by the General Assembly of the Arms Trade Treaty was of critical importance, as it is the first international legal instrument that explicitly includes a gender criterion in arms transfers if there is a possibility that such transfers, would be used to commit violence against women and children. We celebrated the first anniversary of the historic adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty on 2 April and we look forward to its entry into force.

The elimination of conflict-related sexual violence would not be possible without addressing the root causes of gender inequality and changing the mindset of the perpetrators, victims and society at large. Victims should be encouraged to speak out and report violence. In most cases victims, especially women, prefer to remain silent to avoid the stigma of being ostracized from their communities, cast out by their husbands and families, and left destitute with their children. Women's empowerment and mainstreaming gender equality in peacekeeping processes and ceasefire agreements are crucial in fighting the scourge. Furthermore, survivors and their families should be provided with sufficient medical, psychological and legal support and rehabilitation programmes.

Capacity-building and technical support from the international community are relevant in helping national Governments deal with sexual violence matters. Governments lack adequate national capacities to investigate sexual violence cases and prosecute sexual violence offenders, and that, regrettably, impedes on accountability. Sufficient resources must be devoted to women-led civil society organizations, particularly those providing services to survivors and those that enable women to access justice and participate in decision-making.

We recognize the work of non-governmental organizations in their role of training officials from Member States, as investigators of gender-based violence for rapid deployment to conflict areas. Namibia supports such initiatives as they can go a long way in assisting the international community in investigating those horrible crimes by bringing the perpetrators to book.

Namibia wishes to re-emphasize the importance of the role of women in conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding. As such, we fully support the inclusion of women in security systems, such as the armed forces, the police and peacekeeping operations and special political missions in support of various United Nations resolutions that recognize that important role. We remain convinced that for the achievement of comprehensive and sustainable peace, all efforts should be made to ensure the participation and contribution of women to peace negotiations and during the execution of post-conflict strategies and programmes.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that Namibia condemns all forms of violence against women in armed conflict and calls for the full implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions. We also urge the parties to conflicts to abide by international legal instruments to protect women and other disadvantaged groups.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Khan (Indonesia): Allow me to begin by commending you, Madam President, on convening today's debate on the very important subject of sexual violence in the context of armed conflict. Indonesia also wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2014/181), containing some valuable recommendations, the implementation of which will strengthen the prevention and elimination efforts against this deeply troubling challenge.

Indonesia would also like to associate itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Viet Nam on behalf of the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

While we applaud the evolvement of a global normative framework on sexual violence in armed conflict, not least through the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, resolution 1325 (2000) and others, it is a tragic fact that citizens, particularly women, in large numbers continue to be victimized in conflicts. Being softer targets, women and children are particularly exploited as tactics in combat, becoming casualties too many times with impunity. With its

multifold health, social, cultural and economic impact, armed-conflict-related sexual violence not only affects the victims, but imposes long-lasting disarray on their families, communities and societies at large.

As a country that places high priority on providing conditions for its citizens in which they can live freely without fear and develop, Indonesia strongly believes that the first endeavour should be to build a culture of peace and tolerance and prevent armed conflict itself. For us, that means that the international community should also put a greater premium on the peaceful resolution of disputes while enhancing and sustaining support particularly to those countries that lack capacities and resources. But if the conflict erupts, there must be full adherence to the international humanitarian and human rights laws relating to citizens, and all vulnerable groups, including women and children, must be safeguarded effectively.

Indonesia stands for zero tolerance of sexual violence against all citizens — women, children and men — in armed conflict. To that end, the effort should not be limited to focusing on improving the prosecution and elimination of impunity against cases of sexual violence in conflict. It has to be a comprehensive undertaking with the United Nations system entities playing a more active and supporting role, coupled with an equally meaningful participation and cooperation by all Member States. Foremost in that respect is upholding the rule of law at both international and national levels. I reiterate the significance of the United Nations role in that regard.

Since the primary responsibility falls on the nation State itself, there should be appropriate domestic law enforcement and justice mechanisms dealing with sexual violence in conflict with well-resourced and equipped institutions that can provide the needed care. There must be vigorous and continuous wholesome measures to build an environment and infrastructure in societies that strengthen the respect and protection of women and human life under all conditions.

We believe that the development of the United Nations civilian capacities initiative, along with the advancement of other relevant United Nations and non-United Nations programmes, can enable greater capacity-building in the area of safeguarding women and their rights in conflict-affected countries. While taking such steps, it is also vital that women be seen not just as victims, but also as peace enablers in conflict. History has proven their credentials in creating peace. The policies of the United Nations system and outside it should therefore promote extensive measures to ensure the greater participation of women at all stages from conflict prevention to resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Indonesia supports not only a larger number of women in United Nations peacekeeping missions, but a larger number of women in the leadership of peacekeeping missions as well as related offices in New York and elsewhere.

At this juncture, Indonesia has deployed female peacekeepers in several missions, including the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, and it is committed to increasing the number of its female peacekeepers. Our emphasis on preventing sexual violence in conflict is also evident in our having an adequate personnel capacity on the subject and in our protection of civilians in implementing mission mandates. We fully support the continuation of mandatory training on addressing sexual violence for all peacekeeping personnel. That is why the Indonesian Peacekeeping Centre has included training on the issue and will ensure the continuation of this exercise, based on the standards and materials provided by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

In conclusion, I want to underline the importance of the empowerment of women. Effective policies backed by action to accord them their due rights and equal opportunities will be critical to bolstering the overall work on preventing sexual violence against women and other citizens in conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago): Trinidad and Tobago welcomes yet another opportunity to participate in this open debate on the important topic of women and peace and security. We also commend the Security Council for organizing this event, which is very symbolic in being presided over by the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations in her capacity as President of the Council for the month of April.

Trinidad and Tobago also expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the subject (S/2014/181). We also note with appreciation the very informative briefings prepared by

the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and by the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

Trinidad and Tobago is fully committed to the goal of gender equality. For us, the empowerment of women is an integral part of national development as well as an essential pillar in the maintenance of sustainable peace. Trinidad and Tobago is strongly supportive of the need to enhance efforts to ensure that women are equally represented in all spheres. These include decision-making at all levels, as well as in the field of peace and security. We also applaud the valuable contributions that women have made and continue to make to conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives.

As a State that seeks to fully honour its international obligations, we recognize the importance of resolution 1325 (2000) — a landmark resolution that not only acknowledges the contribution of women to international peace and security, but also addresses women's participation in all aspects of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Trinidad and Tobago subscribes to the rule of law as a fundamental safeguard in the advancement and protection of the rights of women. Consequently, we view as imperative our continued adherence to obligations arising from a number of international instruments that seek to protect the rights of women and girls, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Trinidad and Tobago holds firmly to the view that the prosecution of perpetrators of acts of violence against women and girls during armed conflict is a necessary requirement for lasting and durable peace. In that regard, we remain committed to our obligations under the Geneva Convention of 1949 and its Additional Protocols I and II of 1977. Similarly, as a founding member of the International Criminal Court, Trinidad and Tobago has given domestic legal effect to the Rome Statute, which established the Court, and encourages others to accede to that instrument.

Trinidad and Tobago is situated in a region that continues to experience the scourge caused by the diversion of small arms and light weapons from legal markets to the illicit trade, which has led to an increase in criminal activity in the Caribbean Community. It should be noted that women and girls are disproportionately affected by that illicit trade. In addition, women and girls also experience economic and psychological burdens, abuse and sexual exploitation, which are sometimes linked to other crimes associated with the illegal arms trade.

Trinidad and Tobago hailed the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which it has signed and ratified, and would welcome its early entry into force. We submit that the ATT represents a significant achievement in the global fight to eliminate the diversion of conventional arms to the illicit market, and could contribute to a reduction if not an end to untold human suffering, particularly to women and girls, as a result of this pernicious arms trade.

Lasting peace can be achieved only if women are more involved in decision-making processes relating to peacebuilding and post-conflict development, which are necessary for the sustainable development of our societies. It was that conviction that led Trinidad and Tobago to introduce resolution General Assembly 65/69, the first-ever on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, negotiated in 2010 and adopted by consensus by the Assembly. We look forward to the continued support of delegations in further strengthening the resolution during the upcoming sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

Trinidad and Tobago commends and supports the significant role of United Nations agencies and bodies, such as UN-Women, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, in gender-mainstreaming initiatives and in making available to us information on the ways in which women have contributed and continue to contribute to the maintenance of peace in our societies.

In conclusion, Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to working with other Member States as well as its partners at the regional, hemispheric and global levels to promote the involvement of women as equal partners in matters related to peace and security, including at all levels of the decision-making processes.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Mr. Donoghue (Ireland): Ireland aligns itself with the statement made earlier today on behalf of the

European Union and that made on behalf of the Human Security Network.

Conflict-related sexual violence is a particularly heinous and barbaric crime. It is undoubtedly underreported, yet even so the recent Secretary-General's report (S/2014/181) presents an extensive catalogue of crimes that are ongoing in 20 different country situations in conflict and in post-conflict settings. The victims — women and girls, men and boys — are invariably among the most vulnerable in their societies. Since last year's annual open debate (see S/PV.7044), we have seen further significant normative progress. Resolution 2106 (2013), adopted last June, addressed impunity and effective justice. Resolution 2122 (2013) of last October calls for more consistent implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, with special attention to enhancing women's participation and leadership.

Last September's Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict was endorsed by 145 countries, and the United Kingdom will continue its leadership on the issue with a global summit to be convened in June. The Secretary-General has rightly concluded that at the global level there is now unprecedented commitment and momentum for decisively addressing the scourge of sexual violence in combat. And yet the critical question remains as to how we can translate that normative progress into more widespread change on the ground.

The primary route to ending sexual violence in conflict is for Governments to take national ownership of this issue, national responsibility and national action. The United Nations and the international community make an important contribution, but transformative change happens only when national political leaders adopt this agenda as their own. The Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, understands this better than anyone, having added national ownership as a sixth priority of her mission when she assumed her post. The Office of the Special Representative engages in practical conversations with the relevant parties, making clearer and more consistent requests of national authorities and in return offering ready support and capacity-building. We hope that through this dialogue the reported cases of modest gains can now be scaled up.

The United Nations generally seeks to be as practical and operational as possible in its approach, and we welcome that. For example, there is an increasing focus on training national security-sector actors in confronting sexual violence in conflict. There is certainly room to improve the protection afforded to women and girls from violence in humanitarian emergencies. Irish Aid, the Irish Government's development cooperation programme, seeks to ensure that the protection of women and girls in emergencies is one of the key criteria in its decisions on humanitarian funding. Over the next three years, we will progressively increase the funding we provide for protection in emergency and recovery contexts.

Along with the international community, civil society actors in the countries concerned play a crucial role. The Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, Mary Robinson, is reaching out to women's groups and civil society in that region. She is building a sustainable constituency that will continue to seek change, insist on the importance of ensuring political participation by women and continue to hold Governments accountable for the commitments they have made.

Ireland was happy to be associated yesterday with an event on Burma/Myanmar organized by the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security to look at issues around sexual violence in conflict. The Special Representative and a representative of Burmese civil society, Ms. K'nyaw Paw, participated in the event. A crucial part of Myanmar's transition to democracy will be addressing current and historical human rights abuses, which include crimes of sexual violence. The Secretary-General's report calls for a comprehensive protection and service response for survivors of sexual violence, which we wholeheartedly support.

We must all strive to be as innovative as we can in motivating national leaders to adopt the agenda of women and peace and security as their own. We must be more ambitious in addressing the root causes of sexual violence in conflict — women's second-class status and the culture of impunity. And we must seek to promote women's political and economic empowerment as crucial to the long-term prevention of sexual violence. Only national political ownership in the countries concerned can lead to decisive action to end this scourge. We — the United Nations family, donors and Member States, and civil society — must do all we can to encourage such ownership.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sao Tome and Principe.

Mr. Toriello (Sao Tome and Principe): I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your country's presidency of the Council this month.

While there is much to say on this subject, for the sake of brevity I would like to start by pointing out that at the present stage of its history, the human race has enormously strengthened its physical, emotional and intellectual capacities. That is not a bad thing unless we give such strengths free rein to indulge in selfish exploitation and consumption and to focus solely on greed for self-enrichment in a way that enables a creed of individualism and predatory behaviour to dominate. This is an inborn tendency of humankind, from which spring our separations, divisions, oppositions, conflicts and so forth, resulting, inevitably, in wars.

To put a stop to such myopic, vicious self-destructiveness, we need a strong and decisive force capable of inserting itself into this physical, emotional and intellectual contest. What we need today is to be energized by a new force, that of spirituality and conscience. It is no coincidence that many have called this the era of the awakening of our conscience, although clearly it is not something that will happen easily. The reality is that this process is opposed by various powerful lobbies that exert their political, financial, economic and mass-communications influence to control Governments, directly or indirectly. But despite their opposition, the awakening of our collective conscience is still a reality.

Let us consider some major changes that have occurred in recent history — the rise of a culture of ecology; the growth of a preservationist culture aimed at protecting animal species at risk of extinction; an increase in volunteering activities and human generosity to others, rather than confining efforts to family members and people we know in closed circles or groups; personal inner growth, creating greater awareness and thus greater feelings of responsibility towards society at large; and, last but not least, the embrace of a wider, more holistic culture and vision of life. All of these are signs that the awakening of our conscience exists and is a genuine movement.

What about women, then? Why, in spite of such an awakening of our conscience, do women today still continue to see their rights abused, whether as citizens of the world or as people? It is shocking that in today's advanced world we still have to talk about the rights of women and children as if it were a special concession. Rather than commenting on such an absurdity, repeating once again words that have been said over and over since time immemorial, or speculating intellectually on this issue, I would like to give it more constructive consideration.

Unfortunately, the system by which humankind operates is based on a structure of contradiction, so that whatever may be promoted on the one hand is nullified on the other. We do not take this factor of inherent contradiction into serious consideration, and because it is underestimated, this virus is free to worm its way into our human apparatus and to negatively affect the logic of our behaviour, to the point of affecting the social and intellectual frameworks on which we human beings have constructed the rules for our coexistence. In fact, society in general has based its standards on corrupt values that while supposed to be genuine turn out not to be genuine at all. That is why our society stands for poverty, degradation, corruption, depravity, perversion, the abuse of power, conspiracy, genocide and thousands of other miseries. Since our whole social system has been based on unnatural, subverted values, it has become clear that the system on which we base our way of life is consequently vicious and crushing.

What is needed is a new leadership, based on holistic scientific and educational models that can encourage leaders to observe both themselves and their actions, something that is a precondition for establishing a culture where conscience dominates. In that regard, I should reiterate that it is vital that we find science-based solutions to these issues, and thus that we ensure that scientific programmes are part of the educational and training systems whereby human beings can be taught according to a holistic vision of life that can overturn the sterile philosophies and frameworks that govern us.

As for the younger generation, rather than teaching them only how to earn money, they should be supported through good governance in understanding their innate creative attitude with a view to self-realization. They can be taught natural ways of living, and thereby learn how emotions work and how to listen to each other. They can be taught how, in situations of conflict, to evoke calm in themselves and through their surroundings while practicing good communication methods.

Turning to the subject of women, research has shown that women have an advantage in negotiating because of two skills more often related to them. One is listening, which enables interest and awareness of the importance of truly listening to another person's point

of view and processing it in the context of one's own point of view, instead of always thinking that one's point of view is the only one that is correct.

The second quality and skill that women have that is helpful in the context of negotiations is that they tend to focus on cooperation more than on competition or control. Research has shown that a cooperation-oriented personality leads more often to situations of tolerance that, in my view, are eventually palliative and understanding that are crucial in reaching an agreement.

Another point is that women having a voice in peace and security fulfils a proposed focus area of the post-2015 development agenda concerning gender equality and women's empowerment. It also overlaps the focus area of sustainable society because when women feel empowered due to a peaceful situation, they can create a peaceful family setting, as they are crucial in the raising of children. That peaceful family context then sets the stage for a more peaceful and sustainable society, and therefore a more peaceful world.

It is a well-respected fact that women, who comprise more than half of the world's population, help to keep and protect peace and security through their strong family ties and work in the home, as well as through their influence on the work place and policy in their professional and diplomatic lives. Just like that of the men of honour throughout the world, women's influence is critical to making and preserving the global village of peace and security that every family and community needs and wants.

Fortunately, the United Nations — in its wisdom — has recognized the importance that women play in issues of peace and security by establishing UN-Women. While necessary, UN-Women can also be seen as the result of a distorted societal system and evidence that women have made concessions denying them certain rights.

That is why it is aberrant and offensive to see vicious men, hateful of all society — despite anything they may say — attacking women in public, especially the most defenceless, in the name of some cause or as an act of war, or aberrant pleasure in conflict.

Violence against women is merely violence, without merit or cause. It is without justification and demonstrates the abandonment of hope. And it is not merely violence against women that is unacceptable and tragic, but sexual violence in particular. Rape, as is known, is not a crime of sex but of violence, not a show of power but of immeasurable weakness. It demonstrates the worst in men and in civilization. How is it that men in conflict condone such degradation not only to the women they harm, but ultimately to themselves and all humankind, through acts of sexual violence against women during wartime?

In the end, sexual violence against women in conflict is not a sign of the strength of one power over another — although militias may believe that due to reasons that may date back to generations and civilizations when women were the property of men and their subjugation by opposing forces reflected back on the parties to the conflict.

Our world now has evolved to where it is clear and well-known that those terrible acts stand alone and apart from war, expressing the rapists' inabilities, impotencies and wrongful thinking. Sexual violence against women during conflict only reinforces in the minds of the civilized world how wrong those guilty warriors are and how bereft of merit their positions must be to fall so low as to hurt the most vulnerable, the most innocent and perhaps the least able to defend themselves in those moments, against the senseless, barbaric acts.

As our consciousness continues to grow and the world evolves, we must take a united stand and say "never more" to violence against women. We must hope that those involved in conflict will one day understand why they go to war and why half of the world does not participate in their argument or in the spoils of war. Yet that half always plays a part in the healing and the return from conflict to peace and security once again.

The President: The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give her the floor.

Ms. Alsaleh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I apologize for taking the floor for a second time during the meeting. However, I wish to respond to the statement made by the representative of the Israeli entity.

It is indeed unacceptable for the representative of the Israeli occupation to speak of Israel's respect for human rights. She is proud that her country has signed the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. Accusations are meted out to

Arab countries and the countries of North Africa concerning ways and means to eradicate sexual violence, at a time when Israel continues to practice all forms of violence against thousands of women and young girls — Arabs and particularly Palestinians under Israeli occupation — including acts of killing, rape, violence, arbitrary detention and sexual abuse in detention.

Perhaps the representative of the occupation needs to be reminded that she represents an occupying Power — a raping Power — one that has occupied Arab territories for over 65 years and cannot be called humanitarian, human or even credible. She ought to be ashamed at the mere mention of one crime perpetrated by her regime against a particular Palestinian woman who was forced to give birth to her child at a checkpoint and died without being allowed access to any medical care.

The occupying Power respects none of the human rights of the people under its occupation. Innocents are being killed, including women, children and the elderly. Homes are being demolished on the heads of the inhabitants, and acts of apartheid and ethnic cleansing are carried out.

Let her keep her dispiriting thoughts to herself. We need no sermons from the representative of that discriminatory regime that violates the dozens of resolutions that have condemned it and its abhorrent practices against the Arab peoples, as well as aggression against its neighbours.

I would advise her to cease shedding crocodile tears for the men and women of Syria. Syria needs no such poison. Rather, it awaits the liberation of the Syrian Golan from the Israeli occupation.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.